Ahmadiyya
GAZETTE USA
October 2003

100 years ago

Stoning in Kabul

Remembering the Martyrdom of Sahibzada Abdul Lateef ra

How many times?

By Rasheed Azam, Canada

How many times I have to tell you this?

You have asked me a thousand times or more,

Where is God? The Almighty One,

Creator of the Universe, billion times more,

Where did this all begin? Does anyone know?

When would this end? A catastrophic end,

What is happening to our world?

Is He watching? What man is doing to man?

Selfish, greedy, arrogant, very nasty man!

Not caring for his brother, poor, needy man,

Neighbor against neighbor, in a fighting mode,

Constant on his cell phone, talking to his brain,

Never helping an old lady, crying tiny soul!

Our ever-living and loving God, gave you life,

And Liberty, laws for justice; He is

Watching, listening, talking, caring, and helping.

Listen, you have life, only one life to live,

Make it caring, helping and better talking,

I should tell you this no more.

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From The Holy Quran

Fasting

"O ye who believe ! fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard against evil. The prescribed fasting is for a fixed number of days, but whoso among you is sick or on a journey, shall fast the same number of other days; and for those who are able to fast only with great difficulty, is an expiation - the feeding of a poor man. And whoso does good of his own accord it is better for him. And fasting is good for you, if you only knew."

(Holy Quran 2:184-185)

Spending in the Way of Allah

"The similitude of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like the similitude of a grain of corn which grows seven ears, in each ear a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies it further for whomsoever He pleases and Allah is Bountiful, All-Knowing. They who spend their wealth in the way of Allah, then follow not up what they have spent with taunt or injury, for them is their reward with their Lord, and they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve."

(Holy Quran 2:262-263)

A Hadith on Steadfastness

Suhaib relates that the Holy Prophet said: In earlier times there was a King who had a magician. When he grew old he said to the King: I am grown old, send me a young man whom I could instruct in magic. The King sent him a young man to be instructed. On the young man's way to the magician was a monk with whom he sat and to whom he listened. He was so pleased with the discourse of the monk that every time he went to the magician he would sit with the monk on the way. The magician would beat him and the young man complained to the monk of this. He told him: When you are afraid of the magician say to him: The monk detained me. This went on and one day the young man saw that a huge beast blocked the road so that people could not pass. The young man thought: Now I can find out whether the magician is superior or the monk. So he took up a stone and said: Lord, if the way of the monk is more to Thy liking than the way of the magician, then do Thou bring about the death of this beast so that the people can pass; and he hit the beast with the stone and killed it thus letting the people pass; The young man told the monk of this who said to him: Son, you have become better than I, and I conceive that you have arrived at a stage when you will get into trouble. Should that happen, do not disclose my whereabouts.

The young man began to cure people of blindness and leprosy and all manner of diseases. His fame reached a courtier of the King who had become blind. He came to the young man with costly offerings and said: All this will be yours if you will heal me. The young man said to him: I cannot heal anyone. It is God who bestows healing. If you will believe in God I will pray for you and He will heal you. So he believed in God and God cured him of his blindness. He went to the King and sat with him as he used to. The King asked him: Who has restored thy sight? The man answered: My God. The King inquired: Have you a god beside me? He replied: Allah is your God and my God. The King ordered the man to be seized and he was tortured till he told about the young man who was summoned and the King said to him: Son, have you become so skilled in magic that you can heal the blind and the leprous and all manner of afflicted ones? He said: I do not heal anyone. It is God Who heals. Then he was seized and tortured till he disclosed the whereabouts of the monk who was summoned and directed: Retract thy faith. He refused. The King sent for a saw which was placed in the middle of the monk's head and he was sowed down in two. Then the King's courtier was sent for and was directed to abjure his faith. He too refused and was sowed down. Then the young man was brought and was told to retract his faith and he refused. The King handed him over to a party of his men and told them: Take him to such and such a mountain and when you get to the top, if he still refuses to abjure his faith, drop him down from the top. They took him to the mountain and ascended to the top of it with him. There he supplicated: Lord, deliver me from them whatever way Thou wouldst. The mountain was shaken and they fell down. The young man walked back to the King who asked: What have thy companions done? He answered: God has delivered me from them. He was handed over to another party and they were told to take him in a caique to deep water and in case of persistence in refusing to abjure his faith to drop him into the ocean. They took

him along and he supplicated: Lord, deliver me from them whichever way Thou wouldst. The boat sank with them and they were drowned and the young man walked back to the King who asked him: What have thy companions done? He answered: God has delivered me from them; and added: You will not be able to kill me unless you do what I tell you. The King inquired: What is that? The young man made answer: Assemble the people in an open space and hang me from the trunk of a palm-tree. Then take an arrow from my quiver and placing it in the middle of a bow and say: In the name of Allah, the Lord of this young man; and shoot the arrow at me. If you do thus you will kill me. The King proceeded accordingly. The people were assembled in an open space, the young man was hanged from the trunk of a palm-tree, the King took an arrow from his quiver and placing it in the middle of a bow and said: In the name of Allah, the Lord of this young man; and shot it. The arrow struck the young man in the temple who raised his hand and died.

The people said: We believe in the Lord of this young man. The King was told: You see, that has happened which you had feared; the people have believed. The King ordered trenches to be dug along the roads; they were dug and fire was lighted in them. Then the command went forth that whoever should refuse to abjure his faith would be thrown in the trenches, or would be told to jump in. This went on. A woman came accompanied by a boy and shrank from being thrown in, whereupon the boy said to her: Be steadfast, mother, you re in the right.

(Muslim)

From the Writings of the Promised Messiah[as]

Tread on the Path of Taqwa

He who sincerely enters the fold of my Bai'at, completely obeying me, follows me truly and abandons all his resolves, will be the one whom my soul recommend in these days of calamity.

So, O ye who count among my Jama'at, you will be considered my true followers on the high only when you will truly tread on the path of Taqwa. Therefore, offer your five prayers in humility and fear as if you are viewing God Almighty. Keep the fast sincerely and truthfully. He who is duty bound to pay Zakat, must pay the desired amount. On whom Haj is obligatory, must go and perform it. Do the virtue punctiliously and loathe vice and abandon it.

Beware that no deed will reach God which is deprived of Taqwa. The base of every virtue is Taqwa. The deed whose base is firm, will not be destroyed. It will be that you are tied with sorts of loss and misfortune as were the believers of yore. Therefore, beware lest you tumble. Earth can do you no harm if you have firm bond on the high. Whenever you will suffer, it will be at your own hands and not at the hands of the enemy. If all your earthly prestige is washed away, God will grant you lasting honour on the skies. So do not abandon Him. Surely you will be persecuted and lots of your hopes smashed, but do not pine for them. It is the trial from God to see if you are steadfast or not.

(Kashti-e-Nooh, Page 14)

Friday Sermon delivered by

Hazrat Khalifa-tul-Massih IV (rh)

on December 1, 1989 at Bait-ul-Fazal London

Translated by Sadiqa Hafeez Mian, revised by Shamim Akhtar

After *Tasha'hud, Ta'awuz* and *tilawat* (recitation) of *Surah Al-Fatihah* Hazoor *atba* said; "There were many advantages of our temporary migration to England from Pakistan that came to light gradually and as time passed their importance became increasingly evident. Of all the blessings that we were to receive definitely according to the will of Allah, some were like a medicine that is given to a child for his recovery, his life and his survival, no matter how bitter it is. Allah showered blessings upon blessings on us in a similar way. One of which is that new avenues of service (of Islam) were revealed to us, which we were not paying attention to before. For example, though a long period of time has elapsed, we had made no preparation for the billions of people who inhabit the eastern part of the world, which is known as the socialist world i.e. the part of east that is under socialism. Allah had revealed to the Promised Messiah [as] the glad tidings, I shall give you a large number of Muslims in Russia. Describing the vision he writes -" as numerous as the grains of sand". In addition, the scepter of Russia was also given in his hands, and in the dream it appeared to have barrels like a double-barreled gun. This meant that it (the scepter) could hit long-distance targets and was able to produce long lasting effects.

Before we came or were brought to England, we had these matters in mind, in the sense that these were glad tidings from Allah and every Ahmadi was sure that these prophecies would certainly be fulfilled. But we had not thought about how they would come to pass or how would we play the part a believer needs to play in order to bring about their fulfillment. We did not think about it, nor was it possible in those circumstances. After coming here one of the first services that we were able to render was the publishing of small books and magazines in the languages of eastern socialist countries with the object of conveying the message of Islam. We were able to complete translation of the Holy Quran in some of these languages and in others we were able to publish excerpts from the Holy Quran. Similarly, we were able to translate and publish those Ahadith that we thought

would be helpful in fulfilling the needs of man in the present times. We were also able to select many passages from the writings of the Promised Messiah that are related to these Quranic verses and Ahadith and which are in fact their explanation. The intent was that when a reader, who has gone through the Holy Quran and Hadith, is reading the writings of the Promised Messiah[as], he should enjoy the former two the more and should be better able to understand their meanings. That he should develop a strong realization of the fact that Hadith (sayings) of Hazrat Muhammad [SAW] is an explanation of the Holy Quran and the word (writings) of the Promised Messiah [as] is an explanation of the Hadith (sayings) of Hazrat Muhammad [SAW]. So an attempt was made to collate them in this way and we did succeed in it to some extent. Then this material was translated and thus the books were ready for dissemination. We were doing all that but we did not know how we would be able to send that literature, all those books, to those countries. In addition, we published magazines and had articles written on several topics, had those translated and printed as well. You cannot even imagine how difficult the task was and how great was the responsibility. It was an extensive project: because first we had to find the right person, then we had to meet him and persuade him to do the translation of those books and magazines. Then, we had to look for other translators who were to check that his translation was correct and accurate. It was especially difficult since we ourselves were illiterate in these languages. It was also necessary to find such experts who also knew Arabic and were familiar with Islamic terminology. But Allah made this task very easy from the very start.

One of our young men was learning Russian language in Islamabad. Allah put it in his heart to dedicate his life for Islam. So he offered himself for waqf. I accepted it and he came to England. Through him our contacts started expanding continually. Our first task was to translate the Holy Quran into Russian. We were giving it top priority. His name is Khawar Sahib. He had learned Russian but he was not proficient enough in it to undertake the great responsibility of translating the Holy Quran. But he proved helpful in the initial stages. Then Allah made other means available to us. These instances that I am relating to you should make you realize how the Decree of Allah works. When men move their hands to do some thing it is actually the hand of Allah that is at work. When men take a step forward they do so with power from Allah. The hand of Allah is behind all the work that is being done for the cause of faith and you can see how Allah creates the means. Finding an expert in England who is good at Arabic and also familiar with Islamic terminology seemed to be extremely difficult. But Allah is Almighty, we were able to find an Ahmadi scholar from India who had done Ph.D., in the Russian language from Russia. Once, his father was visiting Karachi by chance at the same time that I was. I met him a couple of times. He was a very sincere devotee. Some time later, he desired that his son, who had learned Russian, should serve the faith. He started writing letters to me saying that his son had returned from abroad devoid of faith but it is his (father) great desire that he (son) should serve the faith. I prayed for him (son), made direct contact with him and then the professor (son) himself came to England and dedicated his time [for the service of Islam]. He turned a new leaf. His father used to say of him that his heart was devoid of faith. Now his heart is filled with light of faith and sincerity. He sacrificed a lot of his time. He

stayed here for a long time and continued working on the Russian translation of the Holy Quran when he went back. We were also able to find other professors to review that translation so that if it had any lingual flaws that might be corrected and it might be polished and made perfect.

In this way Allah enabled us to translate the Holy Quran into different languages. As I have illustrated, Allah always provided the means. Khawar Sahib, his name is Kaleem Khawar, goes to meet a professor in some connection. By chance a professor, who is an expert in an Eastern European language, drops in. And when the two are introduced to each other he (Khawar Sahib) says to him," we were looking for you." Thus one person helps find another person and this continues till it seems that these meetings were preplanned and predestined. If you look at all these facts then not even a simpleton, who has an iota of truth in his heart, would fail to realize that it could not be the outcome of mere coincidence or chance. It was the Divine Will that was at work. Providentially, we were able to prepare Islamic literature in great abundance in the languages of Eastern Europe - Russian and Chinese in a short period of time. We were waiting to see what Allah had in store for us. There were great hurdles in our way. You know how those hurdles began to disappear. When the Berlin wall was being torn down and those watching it on television were expressing their excitement and happiness in strange ways, my heart was singing hymns in praise of Allah. They were thinking that the wall was being torn down for them, but I knew that the wall of Berlin was being demolished for Hazrat Muhammad[saw] and the time had come for Islam to spread in those countries. All the preparations that Allah had made for us do were not going to be wasted. In fact Allah had helped us complete our preparations in an adequate manner and at the time when all the hurdles were going to disappear. As soon as we were ready to serve, Allah removed all the hurdles. This is the Living God, the God of Ahmadiyyat, the Patron and Refuge of Ahmadiyyat, the God Who has always been at its back and Who has guided us at every step. There is no power in the world that can drive out the love of God from our hearts. No one can create any doubts in our hearts. We constantly witness His Divine Decree manifesting itself in different ways in our everyday life. Some times its manifestation is evident in separate individual incidents and some times we witness convergent manifestations of it revealing a beautiful, orderly pattern. At such junctures we realize that even when we are asleep or are not vigilant, our Allah is indeed awake and Vigilant and He accomplishes those tasks for us that we are negligent or incapable of.

I believe that by the Grace of Allah the second period of the predominance of Islam will set in very fast. By the 'second period' I mean the period of 'aakhareen' (the others), which is the period of the Promised Messiah[as] and by `set in very fast' I mean that now its speed will be accelerated further.

Thus Allah made the extremely difficult tasks easy for us. Even now the experts find it hard to believe that we were able to do all this amazing work in such a short period of time. What they do not know is that it is actually a miracle of the Omnipotent. It is His love, compassion and kindness that makes the difficult easy for us. Now new means and resources have become available and I believe that by the Grace of Allah the second period of the predominance of Islam will set in very fast. By the 'second period' I mean the period of "aakhareen' (the others), which is the period of the Promised Messiah[as] and by `set in very fast' I mean that now its speed will be accelerated further. There are many parts of the world that are now open for us. They comprise a vast area of the world which, if not bigger than the rest of the world (where the message of Islam has reached), is not much smaller either. These areas comprise the whole population of China, Russia, Eastern Europe, and those eastern and western countries that are under the spell of Socialism. This is a huge population. At one time there were no means of conveying the message of Islam to more than half the population of the world. When I perceive that they are now available to us, my heart is filled with gratitude and praise for Allah and I am convinced that it [spreading the message of Islam] is the work of Allah and He will get it accomplished. But at the same time I feel a greater sense of responsibility too. It is the lot of man that as he fulfills one obligation the next is ready for him. As one problem is solved, another crops up. Now I am worried about who our army will be, who will enter through these open paths. Who are the waqfeen who are capable of fulfilling these new responsibilities? Right now we do not have any experts in these languages who could go there and serve. I believe that in the beginning we will have to mould the hearts in those regions through dissemination of literature.

As one problem is solved, another crops up. Now I am worried about who our army will be, who will enter through these open paths. Who are the waqfeen who are capable of fulfilling these new responsibilities?

I have repeatedly stressed that Ahmadis of the rest of the countries of the world, where immigrants from these [socialist] countries have settled, have a great responsibility. They should develop contact with those immigrants. They should try to find such mujahideen (strivers) from among them who, by the Grace and Mercy of Allah, will be filled with a passion to serve the Faith [Islam] in their respective countries and who will devote [waqf] their lives to it. We can give them the adequate education [in Islam] necessary for the fulfillment of their initial obligations and then they can be sent to their respective home countries.

Besides these people, there is this army of waqfeen nau on whom will fall great responsibilities within the next twenty years. In this regard I exhort the segment of the Jama'at that participated in the scheme by Allah's favor, to take the training of their children more seriously and do it in accordance with the instructions of Tehrik-e-Jaded. They should make every effort

possible to make these children ready to do magnificent work for the cause of Allah. Preparing children for Allah is more important than preparing an animal for sacrifice on Eid. It is a custom in our country and I have observed that people, who do no other act of righteousness, or maybe, do not offer Prayers even, take great pains to raise a sheep with love and care and spend a lot of money on it. There are such laborers who cannot feed their children properly but would feed grams (chana) to their ram. They understand that they are presenting their animal as a sacrifice to Allah so they decorate the animal and put jewelry on it and dye the animal in different colors and when they take the animal for sacrifice it is decorated like a bride.

In comparison to a ram these children have immense importance. Their parents should prepare them for Allah with a love greater than the love with which a man prepares a goat or ram that he is going to slaughter as a sacrifice to Allah. What is the jewelry for these children? It is taqwa (righteousness). They are to be decorated with taqwa. Therefore it is most important that they should be made muttaqee (righteous) from childhood. Make their environment clean and holy. Do not do any thing that will make them dislike religion and inclined to the world. Give your full attention to them as should be given to a special thing that is being prepared for an especially magnificent purpose.

They should make every effort possible to make these children ready to do magnificent work for the cause of Allah. Preparing children for Allah is more important than preparing an animal for sacrifice on Eid.

Fill their hearts with taqwa in such a way that instead of playing in your hands they may begin to play directly in the hands of Allah. Just as one entrusts an object to another person, from the very beginning you can entrust them directly to Allah. But the condition is taqwa. Taqwa does not need any intermediaries or other means. Formally, they will belong to the Jama'at and Tehreek-e-Jaded but, in reality, the children whom you will put in the lap of Allah, will be taken care of by Allah. He will supervise and nurture them in the same way as He did the Promised Messiah [as] .He wrote:

From the beginning I was under your care;
I was nurtured in Your lap like a suckling babe.

He must have said this couplet after studying his past life in depth and detail. He must have realized that as far as he could remember, since his infancy when he was a suckling, he had the love of Allah in his heart. He had a bond with Allah. Allah was always protecting him and guiding him at every step. The Promised Messiah humbly submits;" O Allah I was always in Your lap." So put these children in Allah's lap.

We have enormous responsibilities and a huge workload. We are much smaller in number as compared to the nations whom we have to win over to Islam. Our wisdom, our knowledge, our worldly resources are insignificant compared to the wisdom, knowledge and worldly resources of the nations we have to win over to Allah. So

there is only one-way and that is the only one: to hand over our waqfeen and ourselves to Allah and start playing in His hands.

It is a fact that anything, no matter how weak, can do wonders in the hands of a strong person. It may have no wisdom but a wise man can put it to superb use. We are mere pawns. It is essential for Ahmadis to always consider themselves as such and always keep it in mind. Have you not seen how chess players can play with pawns that lack the power of moving from one place to another on their own? These pawns do not have any wisdom or sense to know which moves are vital for their survival and which would mean their defeat. A good chess player can move these pawns that cannot move or think, in such a way that they can defeat even the most skillful players. The decision of defeat or victory rests on the role that these lifeless, brainless pawns play on the chessboard. The great works of Allah are conducted in a similar manner. We too are lifeless pawns and have no power or intellect. But we are in the hands of Allah. There are others pawns in front of us which are under the control of Satan and the atheists and then there are those who think that they themselves are the God, and they think they move on their own and think on their own. On the contrary, we consider ourselves mere lifeless pawns that have no power or mind of their own but are in the hands of our God. This feeling of humbleness is true and genuine and there is no understatement of facts to affect humbleness. This indeed is our real position as compared to the rest of the world. But if God so wishes and He starts putting us to use and if we put ourselves into His hands then, this game of chess will be certainly won for Islam. No power in the world can avert this victory. It is necessary to train these children from this point of view. Entrust them to Allah.

As for the supervision that Tehreek-e-Jadid has to do, as already mentioned, I have given them instructions and they are making preparations accordingly. My only fear is that they may delay the preparation thinking that these children are very young right now and it will be long before they grow up. The fact is that children have to be disciplined form childhood. It is extremely difficult to reform badly brought up children. This [childhood] is the time when these tender sprouts can be directed any way that we want them to. Attend to them now. Keep them under your control. All over the world the Administration of the Jama'at should keep watch on the life of every waqf-e-nau child and keep in touch with the parents. They should know that they belong to a living Jama'at through which the will of Allah is being carried out. This awareness is very essential and it will develop if central administration of Tehreek-e-Jadeed keeps an active and meaningful contact with them (parents) and asks them to keep them up to date with the progress of the child they have entrusted to Allah. Tell them, You have a big

You have a big responsibility. You have a guest of Allah in your home. Though we all belong to Allah but you have a special guest with you and you are preparing him for Allah. What are your plans? How are you training him?

responsibility. You have a guest of Allah in your home. Though we all belong to Allah but you have a special guest with you and you are preparing him for Allah. What are your plans? How are you training him? Tell us. Keep us informed about him, his health, his behavior and manners. And regularly instruct them to teach him this or that particular kind of work.

I think that the waqif children from the western countries have greater facilities of learning different languages than those who are from other parts of the world. Learning a language is very difficult and should start from childhood. Teaching a language is not easy; as it needs to be done by experts who have devoted their lives to it and who along with their colleagues have been involved in extensive research over a long period of time. Such expert teachers are available in the well-developed countries of the west. Right now, Tehreek-e-Jadeed should select children for Eastern Europe and socialist countries where western languages are spoken and also for China, Korea, North Korea, and Vietnam etc where eastern languages are spoken. If they think that ten waqfeen will be needed they should select and train twenty or thirty. How many children can be trained for each country will be determined on the basis of facts and figures. But the work needs to be started right now. For instance, if we need children for Poland, we should select waqfeen from countries where Polish is spoken. Germany has a big Jama'at and Germany, by the Grace of Allah, is leading in sacrifice. There are many couples that have offered their children for waqf and many are still doing it. The children who have facilities of learning a particular language should be asked to do so as it suits their situation. There are many languages that are related to German language and the German nation has historic links with those countries. In England also there are opportunities to learn many languages. Some children can learn certain languages here. In Northern Europe, Scandinavia has good facilities for teaching many languages. Groups for certain countries can be prepared over there. But this decision cannot be made on the basis of a general review. Only after a detailed examination of the particulars of waqfeen boys and girls, can we decide that we will train ten or twenty or thirty Waqfeen for a certain country. Then decide how many of these will be girls who can serve as scholars and work from home and they will be trained for this particular purpose. And it can then be decided how many will be boys and where and in which particular fields they will work. Then, by the Grace of Allah, not only will they need to learn the language they are intended to master but also the Urdu language so that they may be able to read the Urdu works of the Promised Messiah[as]. Also

Thus three languages is the minimum requirement. If any one wants to learn more than three he may do so but not less than three under any circumstances. We need to tell them that whether they are learning Polish, Hungarian, Czechoslovakian, Romanian or Albanian, they have to learn Urdu and Arabic also.

Arabic which has fundamental importance as the Holy Quran and Ahadith are in Arabic. It will be necessary to teach them Arabic.

Thus three languages is the minimum requirement. If any one wants to learn more than three he may do so but not less than three under any circumstances. We need to tell them that whether they are learning Polish, Hungarian, Czechoslovakian, Romanian or Albanian, they have to learn Urdu and Arabic also. As far as I know these countries have facilities for teaching even these languages. If they do not have these facilities then, as I have been instructing from the very beginning, Tehreek-e-Jadeed should make videos and cassettes to teach Urdu and Arabic. These videos should be related to the literature of the Jama'at and teach use of Islamic terminology. The videos and cassettes available in the market do not serve our purpose. The kind of language that they teach is not of much use to us. They talk about how to ask for pork or wine. How to stay at a hotel or how to find dance clubs? The have made these based on the language useful for their life style. How can our children learn to preach in a language from these tapes? They may be able to learn the structure [Grammar] of a language from these tapes but the Jama'at will have to put in the specific vocabulary relevant to our purpose. This will have to be done according to a specific plan.

It is getting late. Now these children have started playing. Some times I receive their photographs and learn that the waqf child who was born four years ago now talks and walks. The parents send me his pictures out of love. Sometimes they send me letters written in their childish handwriting. Some letters have just lines from the beginning to the end. The child draws lines and thinks he has written a letter. I enjoy such letters a lot. This is a way of creating the love of the Khalifa in their hearts from childhood and establishing a bond of personal love with him. These matters are being taken care of. I am concerned about the real, the core training that is needed for these children. I am afraid that we are lagging behind in this respect. We should attend to it and till the Tehreek-e-Jadeed assigns specific tasks to these waqfeen- e-zindaghee, they can make a start. They already know the two, actually three, things that they have to learn. The first is taqwa. I have already spoken about it. The love and fear of Allah should be instilled in their hearts from childhood. The other two things are learning Arabic and Urdu. These two languages are compulsory for all Waqfee-e-nau. Every waqif Ahmadi will learn Arabic and Urdu. So wherever it is feasible, make arrangements for teaching these two languages and start right now.

While I was pondering over this subject and contemplating that we are helpless brainless chess pawns in the hands of Allah, I was reminded of an old dream of mine that is relevant to the present circumstances. I do not remember whether I have ever related it to you or not. But it is a very interesting dream and its' meaning is more clear now. I saw this dream between 1977 and 1978. It was the beginning of the Iranian revolution and changes were taking place in Afghanistan as well. I dreamt that I am looking at a scene but I am only a spectator and not a part of it. The scene that is before me shows some young men standing in a big circle. Turn by turn they sing an Arabic sentence in an extremely melodious voice. Then they sing the same sentence in English. They continue to do so, singing alternately first in Arabic and then in English. It seems that the sentence they are singing is this verse of the Holy Quran:

La yalamu illa hu La yalamu illa hua

No one knows except He No one knows except He

I see a succession of scenes in which I am only a spectator. As I said before I am there and yet I am not there. One moment I have before me the scene of these young men singing and then I see Iraq, and I remember Syria (Sham), then Iran, then Afghanistan then Pakistan and various other countries one after the other. And I think that none but Allah knows the ultimate out come of the revolutions and strange events that are taking place in these countries. We think that these are accidental historical events. We think that they have occurred by chance. But the singing young men create a very strong impression that these events are not separate or accidental, that they are linked like a chain and are predestined. We are watching these events but we do not understand what is happening. *La yalamu illa hu.* No one knows but Allah, Whose decree is at work. This was the dream that I related to Chaudary Anwar Sahib who was here in those days and also to some other friends saying, it is a strange dream. It seems that some great events are going to follow in the wake of these events. We see political interests and goals behind them but the reality is otherwise. Allah has some other design'. I think that the change in Russian policy has a connection with events in Afghanistan. They (Russians) have learned some lesson there. Experience there has revealed certain facts that are responsible for these great revolutionary changes. A historian or a politician of this world looks at events from a different angle and he understands them differently. But the believer perceives the decree of God behind these events and they give him a different message and he becomes vigilant and gets prepared in the light of these messages. Hence what the hand of Allah is pointing to is clearly evident. It is beckoning you to move forward and conquer the whole world for Hazrat Muhammad Mustafa[saw] because; now the whole world is opening her doors for you.

O, brave gallants of the True Faith! O you, who claim to be the servants the Faith, take advantage of these opportunities, move forward and conquer the whole world for the True Faith and for the God of True Faith. May Allah enable us to do so. Ameen.

Announcement

(regarding Tahir Foundation)

Hazrat Khalifatul Masih in his speech on the seconcd day of Jalsa UK 2003, urged those members of Jamaat who are well versed in Urdu as well as in English languages and can translate material from Urdu to English to come forward and volunteer themselves so that the work of translating the Jamaat literature be accomplished, efficiently. In this regard, members of USA Jamaat are requested to submit their names at the following address:

AhsanullAh Zafer,
Amir Jamaat Ahmadiyya, USA
15000 Good Hope Road,
Silver Spring, MD 20905

*The Great Sacrifice of Hazrat Sayed Sahibzada Abdul Latif*ra

Speech delilvered by Sahibzada Sayed Rashed Latif Rashedi at the occasion of Jalsa Salana, USA, 2003

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اسْتَعِيْنُوْا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلٰوةِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ ۝ وَلَا تَقُوْلُوْا لِمَنْ يُّقْتَلُ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ اَمْوَاتٌ ؕ بَلْ اَحْيَآءٌ وَّلٰكِنْ لَّا تَشْعُرُوْنَ ۝ وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوْعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْاَمْوَالِ وَالْاَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرٰتِ ؕ وَبَشِّرِ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ ۝ الَّذِيْنَ اِذَآ اَصَابَتْهُمْ مُّصِيْبَةٌ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَاِنَّآ اِلَيْهِ رٰجِعُوْنَ ۝ اُولٰٓئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوٰتٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ وَّاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُوْنَ ۝

(البقرہ 154-158)

In the verses I just recited from Sura Baqara, Allah Jalla Shanahoo is saying that those who are killed in the way of Allah are not dead. They are living but you do not understand that. In other words that is something which is beyond your comprehension.

Then Allah Jalla Shanahoo is telling us that He puts the believers through trials of fear, hunger, loss of wealth and even the loss of their lives and their children. But there is good news for those who patiently persevere these trials and when they suffer through these trials they say, "surely, to Allah we belong and surely to Allah we return".

The good news that Allah promised these people is,

اُولٰٓئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوٰتٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُوْنَ ۝ (البقرہ 158)

"Those are the ones on whom the blessing and mercy of Allah descend. And they are the rightly guided".

Almuhtadoon is translated as rightly guided. But Promised Messiah (AS) in his commentary on Sura Baqara says that 'Almuhtadoon ' is that stage of spiritual ascension where a sage person knows exactly and precisely what Allah wants of him and he delivers it. In worldly terms we may say that there is a meeting of the minds.

Today we are commemorating the first 100th anniversary of an outstanding sacrifice of Hazrat Sayed Sahibzada Abdul Latif (RTA) in Kabul Afghanistan. Our Promised Messiah (AS) has narrated the entire heart-wrenching event of that Shahadat in Tazkeratul Shahadatain.

Hazrat Sayed Sahibzada Abdul Latif (RTA) passed each and every one of those tests and trials mentioned in the verses I just recited and he knew exactly what Allah wanted of him and he delivered.

Now let me tell you that heartbreaking story of this brave and devoted disciple of Promised Messiah (AS).

Sayed Sahibzada Abdul Latif (RTA) was born in 1840 in Saidgah, District Khost and Paktia province of Afghanistan. His family tree goes up to Holy Prophet Mohammed (SAWS) through his grand-

son Hazrat Imam Hassan (RTA). Among his forefathers is Sayed Ali Hajveri who is also known as Data Ganj Bakhsh, the earlier torchbearer of Islam in the subcontinent of India and Pakistan. This is the same Data Ganj Baksh who is buried in Lahore, Pakistan.

One of the grandsons of Data Ganjbakhsh by the name of Sayed Sahibzada Akhund Saeed carried the torch of Islam to the tribes of Southern Afghanistan. Having established Islam in that part of Afghanistan he settled in a place near Khost, which was named by the family as Saidgah and continues to exist by the same name until this day.

After Sahibzada Sayed Akhund Saeed passed away his son Sahibzada Sayed Mohammed Ahmadi took the lead in spreading Islam. Interesting to note that the grandfather of Shaheed-e-Marhoom was already named Ahmadi. He was followed by his son Sayed Sahibzada Mohammed Sharif as the leader of the family. Sayed Sahibzada Abdul Latif was son of Sayed Sahibzada Mohammed Sharif. After Sahibzada Sayed Mohammed Sharif, the leadership of the family passed on to Sayed Sahibzada Abdul Latif (RTA).

Every one of these eminent personalities was a top scholar in Islamic studies as well as the Arabic and Persian languages. In recognition of their high position and out of respect, the kings of Afghanistan along the way had bestowed large gifts of land on this highly revered family. By the time Sayed Sahibzada Abdul Latif (RTA) took the leadership position of the family, the family owned many thousand acres of land in Paktia and Kandahar provinces as well as in the District of Bannu of North West Frontier Province of then India (now Pakistan).

Sayed Sahibzada Abdul Latif (RTA) was educated at the famous institute of Sayed Abdul Haye (RTA) in Lucknawoo, India where he learned to speak Urdu fluently. He had a collection of books in the family library of more than 60,000 hard cover books. His library was one of the largest in all of Afghanistan. He taught classes in Islamic studies and trained religious scholars in a private school in Saidgah, which was funded by him. In excess of 50,000 followers pledged allegiance to him as a Wali of his time.

In 1893 King Abdul Rahman of Afghanistan appointed Sahibzada Sayed Abdul Latif (RTA) as a member of the Durand Line Commission to represent Afghanistan at the joint British-Afghan commission to determine the boundary between India and Afghanistan. During this commission he met a Muslim member of the British Commission by the name of Sir Abdul Qayyum Khan. Since Abdul Qayyum Khan was aware of Sahibzada Abdul Latif's high and revered position in Afghanistan, he told him about Hazrat Mirza Ghulam-e- Ahmed (AS) of Qadian who had claimed to be the Promised Messiah. Concurrently, Sir Abdul Qayyum Khan also gave Shaheed-e-Marhoom a book written by Hazrat Mirza Ghulame Ahmed, the Promised Messiah (AS). That book was "Ayeena Kamalate Islam". Or the mirror of the wonders of Islam.

Shaheed-e-Marhoom (RTA) took the book with him to Khost and read it thoroughly. He became so fond of this book that many of his disciples later used to say that Shaheed-e-Marhoom (RTA) always carried that red cover book with him under his arm and quoted frequently from it during his sermons. That book with red cover became a constant companion of Shaheed-e-Marhoom (RTA). That is the reason why I chose the red cover for the Farsi translation of Tazkeratul Shahadatain.

When King Abdul Rahman Khan of Afghanistan died Sayed Sahibzada Abdul Latif (RTA) lead the Janaza prayers of the king in Jame Masjid Kabul. Following the death of King Abdul Rahman a struggle started for the throne between his two sons, Habibullah Khan and his brother Nasrullah Khan. The tribal leaders deliberated for many hours in Jame Masjid - Kabul but were unable to decide between the two brothers as to who should be the next king. Finally they turned to Sayed Sahibzada Abdul Latif (RTA) for advice. Shaheed-e-Marhoom asked Habibullah Khan that if he were to be made the king of Afghanistan, would he promise to follow Sharia according to the Holy Quran. Habibullah Khan answered yes he would. Then Sahibzada Abdul Latif (RTA) got up and tied the royal turban on the head of Habibullah Khan, thus declaring him the next king of Afghanistan. His brother Nasrullah Khan was furious and later let it be known that he would never forget this and waited for revenge.

Sayed Sahibzada Abdul Latif (RTA) returned to Saidgah. Having read that book, "Ayeena Kamalate Islam", Shaheed-e-Marhoom told his followers that he is certain that the writer of that book was from Allah and that he was the Promised Messiah. Therefore, he decided to send one of his disciples to Qadian, India to give his allegiance to Promised Messiah (AS). This disciple's name was Maulawi Abdul Rahman (RTA). Maulawi Abdul Rahman went to Qadian, met Hazrat Mirza Ghulame Ahmed (A.S.) and gave the allegiance. When Maulawi Abdul Rahman returned to Kabul he began distributing a pamphlet of Ahmadiyya Jamaat against the so called Jehad and he began preaching people that Jehad with the sword was no longer permitted in Islam according to the Messiah of the last age. Such talk infuriated the Mullahs in Kabul as well as the king who had declared Jihad against the British. So one night Maulawi Abdul Rahman was martyred by suffocation with a pillow while he was asleep. Inna Lillahe Wa Inna Ilaihe Rajeoon.

In early October 1902, Sahibzada Sayed Abdul Latif (RTA) with the permission of King Amir Habibullah Khan departed for Hajj of Baitullah Sharif. His plan was to visit with Promised Messiah (AS) upon return from Mecca. But when he arrived in Lahore he discovered that due to the spread of Cholera in India the British Government had suspended travel to Mecca. Therefore Shaheed-e-Marhoom decided to go to Qadian and visit with Promised Messiah (A.S.). He arrived in Qadian and met with Promised Messiah (A.S.) for the first time in the later part of October 1902.

Hazrat Promised Messiah (A.S.) describes this first visit with Sayed Sahibzada Abdul Latif (RTA) in Tazkeratul Shahadatain in these words. "I declare in the Name of that Almighty in whose hands is my life that I found his heart as full of spiritual light as was evident on his face. He was of those truthful who reach the zenith of piety and who for the love of Allah sacrifice their lives, their glory and their wealth just like they were worthless things. And his faith was so lofty and so strong that if I compared it to a huge mountain, I am afraid that my comparison will be deficient."

Shaheed-e-Marhoom spent about four months in the blessed company of Promised Messiah (A.S.). During his stay in Qadian many in-depth discussions on religious and spiritual topics took place between Promised Messiah (A.S.) and Sayed Sahibzada Abdul Latif (RTA). Hazrat Promised Messiah (AS) has recorded these discourses in his book

"Tazkeratul Shahadatain" in great details. Promised Messiah (AS) has expressed amazement and admiration at the depth of Shaheed-e-Marhoom's knowledge of the Holy Quran.

While in Qadian, Shaheed-e-Marhoom told his companions that he had been receiving revelation from Allah telling him to go to Afghanistan and sacrifice his life. There is that precise definition of "Almuhtadoon". Shaheed-e-Marhoom knew exactly and precisely what Allah wanted of him and he decided to go to Afghanistan to surrender his life.

In the later part of January in 1903, Sayed Sahibzada Abdul Latif (RTA) left Qadian to return to Afghanistan. Upon his return to Khost, tribal chiefs and other dignitaries began pouring in to Khost to congratulate him on his return from the pilgrimage or Hajj to Bait-Ullah Sharif. He informed them that he could not go to Hajj because of the Cholera but that he instead visited with a man who claims to be the Promised Messiah and Imam Mehdi. He told them that he believed in him and gave him his allegiance or Biaat. Many of his family members and tribal leaders cautioned him against those statements. They told him that the king would not approve of his allegiance to some Indian Messiah. Even the governor of Khost by the name of Shereen Dil Khan who was a follower of Shaheed-e-Marhoom pleaded with him to keep quiet about his allegiance to the Qadiani Imam Mehdi. Shaheed-e-Marhoom told them that it seemed they have two Gods and that they feared the King more than they feared Allah.

One afternoon as Shaheed-e-Marhoom (RTA) was entering the mosque for Asar prayers, 50 horsemen soldiers showed up in the compound of the mosque. The captain of the guard approached Shaheed-e-Marhoom and told him that the governor wished to see him. Shaheed-e-Marhoom replied that of course he would go after the prayers. Then Shaheed-e-Marhoom went inside the mosque and led the Asar prayers. Then he went to his house before leaving with the guards.

Inside the house, he gathered his family members and announced that he wanted to say good-bye to them because they were seeing him alive for the last time. According to the elders in the family who told us later, there was a dreadful silence, then disbelief, then panic and then loud cries of helplessness. They could not believe what they had heard. Shaheed-e-Marhoom was like the family fortress, their rock, and their shield. To them their universe was collapsing around them.

Obviously Allah had revealed to Shaheed-e-Marhoom that this was the last time he was going to be with his family in this world. Shaheed-e-Marhoom (RTA) tried to calm them down and said, " Why are you crying so hard? Haven't you heard that an elephant is worth one hundred thousand when alive but is worth two hundred thousand after death? Show patience and have faith in Allah." Then he left with the guards.

Shaheed-e-Marhoom (RTA) arrived at the governor's mansion and was detained there for a few nights. Then he accompanied the guards to Kabul. Upon arrival in Kabul he was detained in a jail cell in the compound of the Royal palace, called Aarg. He was handcuffed and a heavy chain of 130 pounds was wrapped around his neck and waist. Shackles weighing 20 pounds each were put on his feet.

In these painful and draconian conditions he spent 4 months in that prison. During this notorious imprisonment, many times messages would come from the King that if he would deny the truthful-

ness of the Qadiani Messiah he would be freed. Shaheed-e-Marhoom would reply, "I am a man of knowledge and Allah has given me the ability to know the truth from falsehood. I know that this man is actually the Promised Messiah. I also know that in this declaration I am jeopardizing my life and my family but I have chosen my faith over my life and all of the other comforts of life." He sent this same reply several times in response to all of the offers of the King.

After four months of imprisonment, the King ordered him to be presented in an open court. The king told him that if he would repent he would be freed with honor. Shaheed-e-Marhoom replied that such a thing was impossible because the wrath of the rulers of this world terminate with death on earth, but the wrath of Allah never ends. Then Shaheed-e-Marhoom told the King that although I know that I am on the side of truth, I am willing to debate with those scholars or Mullahs who denounce my faith. If they can prove me wrong, then I would deserve your punishment. The king liked this suggestion and asked Nasrullah Khan to designate eight Mullahs for the debate. This is that same Nasrullah Khan, the King's brother, who had been nursing the fire of revenge for Sayed Sahibzada Abdul Latif (RTA) over his loss of throne to his brother King Habibullah. So you can imagine what kind of vicious and Shaitan Mullahs he picked for the debate.

Many people were present at the debate. But the debate was in writing and no one knew what was being discussed. Towards the end of the day, Shaheed-e-Marhoom was asked that if this person from Qadian is the Promised Messiah then what is your view about Hazrat Isa (Jesus) (A.S.). Shaheed-e-Marhoom very calmly replied that according to the Holy Quran Hazrat Isa had died and he was not coming back. Upon hearing this answer the Mullahs began tearing their shirts and shouted that now there was no doubt that this man was Kafir and Murtad. (A non-believer and apostate). The Mullahs then wrote the Fatwa (edict) and declared him a Kafir or non-believer and Murtad or apostate.

It is interesting to note here, how these Mullahs followed exactly in the footsteps of those Jews who at the trial of Hazrat Isa/Jesus (AS) also tore their shirts to express their outrage and then condemned Hazrat Isa (AS) to death. Promised Messiah (AS) says in Tazkeratul Shahadatain that one of the similarities between him and Hazrat Isa (AS) is that those who reject him will walk in the footsteps of those Jews who rejected Hazrat Isa (AS). Just like the Jews at the trial of Hazrat Isa (AS), the Mullahs in Kabul also

Shaheed-e-Marhoom would reply, "I am a man of knowledge and Allah has given me the ability to know the truth from falsehood. I know that this man is actually the Promised Messiah. I also know that in this declaration I am jeopardizing my life and my family but I have chosen my faith over my life and all of the other comforts of life.

tore their shirts in outrage and then condemned Shaheed-e-Marhoom to death.

The next day was Monday. Shaheed-e-Marhoom was once again taken before the King. The King told him that you have been declared Kafir. Are you going to repent or do you accept the punishment. Shaheed-e-Marhoom replied, how can I choose falsehood over truth because of fear? This is not possible for me, he said. The king again promised him many rewards and honors if he would change his mind. This time Shaheed-e-Marhoom spoke more forcefully and told the king that he should not hope for a denial of truth from him.

Shaheed-e-Marhoom replied, how can I choose falsehood over truth because of fear?

Though the King was completely disappointed with the answers in response to his offers, he was still hesitant to sign the Fatwa or edict. Then Nasrullah Khan stood up and addressed the Mullahs in the court and said that the King is a defender of Sharia and a defender of Islam. Do not despair he will endorse your Fatwa, he announced. The King's hand was now forced. Finally the King signed the Fatwa of death by stoning. The stage was now set for an ultimate sacrifice for the sake of Allah.

Imagine the scene. It is Monday afternoon in Kabul in the month of July. The year is 1903. Sayed Sahibzada Abdul Latif (RTA) in chains and shackles walking on foot to Chaman-e-Huzoori, a public park at a distance of about two miles on the outskirts of Kabul. The King and his brother Nasrullah Khan and several others are riding on horses. A large crowd is following Shaheed-e-Marhoom (RTA) walking to the site of his execution.

Upon arrival at the site, Shaheed-e-Marhoom (RTA) was buried up to his waist in the ground. Once again, the King went close to him and told him that even now if you deny the Qadiani Messiah I can rescue you from this but this is your last chance. At least have mercy on your children and your family. Shaheede Marhoom replied, "Nauoozo Billah". "What is the worth of my life, my family or my children in the face of my faith? I will never give up my faith. I am ready to die for my faith." Then the King ordered the Qazi to throw the first stone. The Qazi got off his horse and threw the first stone, which hit Shaheede Marhoom (RTA) on the forehead. Blood began pouring from his forehead and his head bent over. Shaheed-e-Marhoom could be heard reciting the following verse 102 of Sura Yusuf at that time :

رَبِّ قَدْ اٰتَيْتَنِيْ مِنَ الْمُلْكِ وَعَلَّمْتَنِيْ مِنْ تَاْوِيْلِ الْاَحَادِيْثِ فَاطِرَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ اَنْتَ وَلِيّٖ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ تَوَفَّنِيْ مُسْلِمًا وَّاَلْحِقْنِيْ بِالصّٰلِحِيْنَ ۝ (یوسف 102)

Translation is:" O Maker of the heavens and the earth. Thou art my Protector in this world and the Hereafter. Let death come to me in a state of submission to Thy will and join me with the righteous."

Then the King threw a stone, which was followed by a barrage of stones from the gathering. In a short time Shaheed-e-Marhoom (RTA) was buried under a heap of stones. (Inna Lillahe Wa Inna Ilaihe Raji-oon.). This memorable day in the history of Ahmadiyyat was Monday, July 14, 1903. Shaheed-e-Marhoom RTA) lived to be 63 years on this earth.

Promised Messiah (AS) says in Tazkeratul Shahadatain,

" The martyrdom that was destined for Shahzada Abdul Latif took place. Now the punishment of the perpetrators is awaiting."

Shaheede Marhoom replied, "Nauoozo Billah". "What is the worth of my life, my family or my children in the face of my faith? I will never give up my faith. I am ready to die for my faith."

Hazrat Promised Messiah (A.S.) delivered a grave and dreadful warning to the people of Afghanistan in these words,

"Oh land of Kabul you witnessed a grave crime on your soil. When my humble follower Abdul Rahman was killed, Allah remained silent. But after spilling this blood He will not remain silent. Huge dire consequences will follow this tragic event. Oh unfortunate land you have fallen from the sight of Allah because you are the place of this enormous cruelty."

The next day on July 15, 1903 a devastating cholera epidemic exploded in Kabul. You remember that one of the prominent instigators who incited the King against Sayed Sahibzada Abdul Latif (RTA) was Sardar Nasrullah Khan. Well, his wife and his son both were inflicted with the disease and died within a few days. He himself was so terrified by the death of his loved ones that he went into hiding for months. And rumors were flowing in Kabul that Sardar Nasrullah Khan had gone mad and totally insane. The international medical records indicate that the cholera of 1903 in Kabul killed 85,000 Afghans in Kabul and its vicinity. Keep in mind that in those days the total population of Kabul and its vicinity could not have been more than 150,000 in those days. That would mean that more than 50% of the population perished.

King Habibullah Khan who signed the Fatwa was killed while he was sleeping in his own tent and several guards were standing guard at his door. Who actually killed him remains a mystery until this day. But the new king Amanullah blamed Sardar Nasrullah with the murder of king Habibullah Khan. Allah is indeed the best of planners. This is that same Sardar Nasrullah Khan who forced the hand of the King to sign the death Fatwa of Hazrat Sayed Sahibzada Abdul Latif (RTA).

Now Chains and shackles were put on him in Jalal Abad, which is 130 miles east of Kabul. And from there he was forced to walk to Kabul to face the charges of murdering the King. Imagine this was the same man, who was riding a horse when Shaheed-e-Marhoom (RTA) was forced to walk to his Shahadat in chains and shackles. Now Allah had put chains and shackles on this perpetrator to walk 130 miles on foot to his own demise. It is an old sunnat of Allah that He takes revenge on those who do harm to His revered and loved ones.

Is there any wonder why all hell has broken over Afghanistan? As long as the people of Afghanistan do not recognize the enormity of the crime they committed against a loved one of Allah and continue to remain stubbornly opposed to Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmed (AS), Allah's anger and rage will rein over them and their children and the children of their children as it has been with the children of Israel.

Following the martyrdom of

Oh land of Kabul you witnessed a grave crime on your soil. When my humble follower Abdul Rahman was killed, Allah remained silent. But after spilling this blood He will not remain silent. Huge dire consequences will follow this tragic event. Oh unfortunate land you have fallen from the sight of Allah because you are the place of this enormous cruelty."

Hazrat Sayed Sahibzada Abdul Latif (RTA) all of his family including his wife and his children were sent into exile near Mazari Sharif, about a thousand miles to the north of Afghanistan near the border with Russia. They were left there on a barren land where mere survival was a challenge. They remained there for seven years. Then the entire family was ordered to move to the city of Kabul where the women were kept under house arrest while males including children were all put in jail. My father, Sayed Sahibzada Mohammed Tayyib Latif (Marhoom) who was merely 9 years old child, was also kept in jail with the rest of his four elder brothers.

A few years later the family of Shaheed-e-Marhoom was allowed to return to Saidgah, in Khost. But their mistreatment and humiliation continued all the way through 1926. The family continued to be under house arrest. Finally with the help of several Ahmadi Afghans the family escaped to their estate in the District of Bannu of NWFP, which was then India now Pakistan.

With the blessing of Allah in spite of all the hardships and persecution in Afghanistan the children of Shaheed-e-Marhoom (RTA) remained steadfast in their devotion to Ahmadiyyat and have continued their active involvement in the Jamaat of Promised Messiah (AS). Today the grand children of Shaheed-e-Marhoom (RTA) live in the United States, Canada and Pakistan. And Allah has blessed them with good education and respectable professions.

Hazrat Promised Messiah (A.S.) in Tazkera-tul- Shahadatain has called Sayed Sahibzada Abdul Latif as " Sayyadul Shohada " which means the leader or chief of martyrs. Indeed his sacrifice was one of the greatest sacrifices in the name of Allah.

Promised Messiah (AS) writes *"Oh Abdul Latif, thousands of blessings be showered upon you, for you have in my lifetime manifested unparalleled perseverance in steadfastness and truth."*

Here are a few couplets, which Promised Messiah wrote in Persian in the same book on account of this tragic event.

Full of dangers is this desert of life;
Where thousands of serpents are in each direction ;
Lo this clever man from a far away land;

Promised Messiah[as] writes "Oh Abdul Latif, thousands of blessings be showered upon you, for you have in my lifetime manifested unparalleled perseverance in steadfastness and truth."

Crossed that desert in a single stride;
Make note of that chaste and innocent Abdul Latif;
How he sacrificed himself for the sake of Allah;

May Allah have mercy on the people of Afghanistan for they are ignorant and many do not know that they are under the wrath of Allah for what was done to a loved one of Allah in their land. We should pray that May Allah soften and open their hearts to the message of Promised Messiah (AS). Then Allah may remove the suffering, the calamities and the destruction that have engulfed that country.

Ameen.

Feelings of a Tifal

in his own words

about Jalsa Salana USA 2003

My Jalsa Experience 2003

This weekend I attended the Jalsa in Silver Spring, MD with my parents and auntie. I enjoyed the jalsa very much even though I did not fully understand some of the speeches. The best speech I heard was about Hazrat Sahibzada Shah Abdul Latif Sahib of Afghanistan (my daddy gave me the full name). I was sorry to hear that he was put in chains and tortured.

There was a lot of good food that was spicy, but I ate it anyway. It was very hot while we were there and I went inside the air-conditioned masjid a few times, which was very comforting. I also did my namaz inside the masjid. Another good thing about being there was that I got to meet with all my cousins from all over the country. I had a great time playing with them, especially my cousin, Jaffer.

It was fun being there and I told my daddy that I want to go there again next year. Hopefully, I will understand most of the speeches.

Tahir Ahmad
11 and a 1/2 Years Old
Levittown, NY

Sheikh Nasir Ahmad (Shaheed) Okara, Pakistan

Azhar Mahmood Nasir, Australia

My respected father, Sheikh Nasir Ahmad was murdered in the name of Allah on Sunday 18th September 1983, when one fanatic attacked him with sharp dagger, seeking paradise as educated by the Maulvis. It was Eid-ul-Adha and my father was waiting in front of our house for the butcher to sacrifice an animal while observing the significance of the day. The butcher was extraordinarilr late and my father while sitting in the courtyard of our house told my grandmother that he would go outside to look for the butcher. It was around quarter past nine in the morning when he was suddenly attacked on his right severely damaging his lung. He was taken to the doctor nearby and then to the military hospital in Okara Cantt for immediate surgery, but sufficient blood had gone into the lungs resulting in loss of breath, and eventually his soul left at 11:20am, *Inna lilla hey wa inna ilahey rajeyoon.*

It was a sad day for the people of Okara. They flocked to our house to share our sorrow and pain. Hadhrat Khalifat-ul-Massih IV[ra] had been on an overseas visit to far Eastern countries and heard the shocking news in Fiji. Maulana Ghulam Bari Saif sahib and Maulana Mahmood Ahmad Shahid sahib (the then Sadar Majlis Khuddam-ul-Ahmadiyya Markazia) visited us in representation of Markaz, conveyed us condolence messages and advised us in the light of the teachings of Islam to bear the shock, giving special attention to my grandparents and my mother.

My father was Secretary Umoor-e-Aama and Secretary Jaidad of Okara Jama'at, and had been performing a lead role in a couple of activities assigned by the Amir sahib Okara. The murderer stated in the court that he was educated by the Maulvis to kill a person like Nasir and this would lead the murderer directly to observe the sweet taste of paradise. He had no personal reasons to choose my father, and he had been looking for a suitable opportunity, and thus got it on the day of Eid-ul-Adha.

My father was born in 1942 in Moga, a township around 100 km from Lahore, in Indian Punjab to Sheikh Fazal Mohammad and Basheeran Begum, and he was the eldest son. My grandfather has five sons and three daughters. He chose his career as a tradesperson in Okara, a grain market around 120km from Lahore, in Pakistani Punjab. My father joined him soon, and with time the whole family got a very good reputation in cloth trading, in retail as well as in whole sale basis. My father was married in 1964. My mother Siddiqa Begum is also a member of a known business family in Gujarkhan, Rawalpindi. Allah the Almighty granted my parents four sons and a daughter. My eldest brother Babar Bhai Jan and younger brother Luqman are successful businessmen in Okara, the second to the eldest, Aamir Bahi Jan is a medical practitioner and surgeon in Okara. Our youngest sister Lubna has recently been married to Mian Mohsin Ahmad in Baltimore, USA. I got my doctorate in Structural Engineering from Australia in 2001, and am now a professional Engineer in Brisbane, Australia.

My father had a very kind and humble personality, with devotion to humanity, Islam and Ahmadiyyat. He is still alive in the memories of people around the globe. May Allah make his soul be in peace and comfort always. Ameen!

SARS

A New Threat To Global Human Health?

By Dr. Khalid Ahmad Ata, MD

Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) is an illness of very recent origin that has set off alarm bells worldwide. Although the condition may start with fever, headache and dry cough the potential to developing a severe breathing difficulty, spread of the disease to various continents of the world, and the lack of specific medicinal remedies against the causative virus have underscored the importance of precaution and preventative measures.

What is SARS?
SARS is a collection of symptoms that may lead to pneumonia. Currently researchers believe that it is caused by a virus possibly in the same family as a virus called Coronavirus.

How does the illness begin?
Once the causative virus enters the human body it usually takes 2-7 (in some cases even up to 10) days to develop symptoms. The illness begins generally with fever that may be higher than 100.4°F/38.0°C. Sometimes it is associated with chills and rigors. Other symptoms including headache, malaise and muscle pains may also accompany. Some persons may have mild respiratory symptoms at the onset of the illness. Occasionally diarrhea may also occur during the febrile stage.

After 3-7 days, a lower respiratory phase begins with the onset of a dry, nonproductive cough or labored breathing which might be accompanied by or progress to hypoxemia (below-normal oxygen content in arterial blood due to deficient oxygenation of the blood). In 10%--20% of cases the respiratory illness is severe enough to require intubation and mechanical ventilation. The mortality rate among persons with illness meeting the current WHO case definition of SARS is approximately 3%.

How SARS spreads?
The primary ways in which SARS spreads appear to be:

Close Contact: Most cases of SARS have involved people who cared for or lived with someone with SARS, or had direct contact with infectious material (for example, respiratory secretions during coughing, sneezing, etc.) from a person who has SARS. Potential ways in which SARS can be spread include touching the skin of other people or objects that are contaminated with infectious droplets and then touching your eye(s), nose, or mouth (sharing of utensils, for instance). This can happen when someone who is sick with SARS coughs or sneezes droplets onto themselves, other people, or nearby surfaces. It also is possible that SARS may spread more broadly through the air or by other ways that are currently unknown.

Traveling: The frequency of human contact increases with traveling. Some people with recent travel to affected countries/cities in South East Asia or those who have had

close contact with persons diagnosed with SARS have also contracted the disease. To date, majority of the cases reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) live in or have visited China (Guangdong province, Hong Kong), Taiwan, Singapore and Vietnam (City of Hanoi). Several cases have been reported in Toronto, Canada. In the USA, as of April 22, 2003, a total number of 239 cases (suspected 202; probable 37), as a result of either previous foreign travel to countries with community transmission of SARS or close contact, have been reported.

As of March 21, 2003, the majority of patients identified as having SARS have been adults aged 25-70 years who were previously healthy. Few suspected cases of SARS have been reported among children aged 15 years or less.

How to suspect a case of SARS?

You may suspect SARS if a person has a respiratory illness of unknown etiology since February 1, 2003 and fulfills the following criteria.

Measured temperature greater than 100.4°F/38°C

AND

One or more clinical findings of respiratory illness (e.g. cough, shortness of breath, difficulty in breathing, or hypoxia

AND

Travel within 10 days of the onset of symptoms to an area with documented or suspected community transmission of SARS (Travel includes transit in an airport in an area with documented or suspected community transmission of SARS. It excludes areas with secondary cases limited to healthcare workers or direct household contacts)

OR

Close contact within 10 days of onset of symptoms with a person known to be a suspect SARS case.

Precautions for Suspected SARS Patients And Close Contacts in Households:

Patients with SARS pose a risk of transmission to close household contacts and health care personnel in close contact. The duration of time before or after the onset of symptoms during which a patient with SARS can transmit the disease to others is unknown. The following infection control measures are recommended for patients with suspected SARS in households or residential settings. These recommendations are based on the experience in the United States to date and may be revised as more information becomes available.

1. SARS patients should limit interactions outside the home and should not go to work, school, out-of-home child care or other public areas until 10 days after the resolution of fever, provided respiratory symptoms are absent or improving. During this time, infection control precautions should be used, as described below, to minimize the potential for transmission.

2. All members of a household with a SARS-patient should carefully follow recommendations for hand hygiene (e.g., frequent hand washing or use of alcohol-based hand rubs), particularly after contact with body fluids (e.g., respiratory secretions, urine, or feces). Detailed "Guideline for Hand Hygiene in Health-Care Settings" are available at www.cdc.gov/handhygiene/ website.

3. Use of disposable gloves should be considered for any direct contact with body fluids of a SARS-patient. However, gloves are not intended to replace proper hand hygiene. Immediately after activities involving contact with body fluids, gloves should be removed and discarded and hands should be cleaned. Gloves must never be washed or reused.

4. Each patient with SARS should be advised to cover his or her mouth and nose with e.g., a facial tissue when coughing or sneezing. If possible, a SARS-patient should wear a surgical mask during close contact with uninfected person(s) to prevent spread of infectious droplets. When a SARS-patient is unable to wear a surgical mask, household members should wear surgical masks when in close contact with the patient.

5. Sharing of eating utensils, towels, and bedding between SARS-patient(s) and others should be avoided, although such items can be used by others after routine cleaning (e.g., washing with soap and hot water). Environmental surfaces soiled by body fluids should be cleaned with a household disinfectant according to manufacturer's instructions; gloves should be worn during this activity.

6. Household waste soiled with body fluids of SARS-patient, including facial tissues and surgical masks, may be discarded as normal waste.

7. Household members and other close contacts of SARS-patients should be actively monitored by the local health department for illness.

8. Household members or other close contacts of SARS-patient(s) should be vigilant for the development of fever or respiratory symptoms and, if these develop, should seek healthcare evaluation. Healthcare providers should be informed, in advance of evaluation, that the individual is a close contact of a SARS-patient. Household members or other close contacts with symptoms of SARS should follow the same precautions recommended for SARS-patients.

9. At this time, in the absence of fever or respiratory symptoms, household members or other close contacts of SARS-patients need not limit their activities outside the home.

As Ahmadi Muslims it is all the more important that we pray to Almighty Allah to protect mankind from this potentially fatal disease, and that He may also Kindly grant cure to those who, unfortunately, have been taken ill by it. Amen.

References:

1. Center For Disease Control And Prevention: http://www.cdc.gov/
2. Johns Hopkins University: http://www.hopkins-heic.org/infectious_diseases/sars/general_faq.htm

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Delegates meet to plan the next year

A brief report on the 2003 US Jama'at Shura

by Syed Sajid Ahmad

In an atmosphere of prayers and zeal for the progress and success of the community in the US, delegates from all over the country met at the Baitur-Rahman Mosque in Silver Spring, MD, the US headquarters of the Ahmadiyya community, to review the activities of the past year and to plan for the next year. More than one hundred and fifty delegates and officers traveled from all corners of the country by air and road to participate in the yearly shura, the advisory council meeting, held May 24-26, under cool cloudy skies and occasional light rain.

Shura proceedings started Saturday afternoon, and continued through Monday morning. All sessions started with readings from the Holy Quran and collective prayers, ended with collective prayers, and were presided over by the US Amir, Dr Ahsanullah Zafar.

The US Amir opened the Shura with the mention of the exemplary leadership of the late Amir MM Ahmad. He mentioned the many blessings the US jama'at shared with Hadrat Khalifatul-Masih IV, rahimahullahu ta'ala. He read a portion of a letter from Hadrat Khalifatul-Masih V, ayyadahulla, addressing US jama'at's financial progress, and his appreciation of US jama'at's work with regard to MTA and alislam.org. He brought to the attention of the participants the need for special attention with respect to assuring matrimonial harmony. He stressed the need to regain the commanding worldwide lead in the collection of Waqf-i-Jadid fund.

The first session was dedicated to the presentation and approval of the minutes of the last shura, presentation of the implementation status of last year's shura recommendations, and yearly progress reports by the secretaries and department heads of Tabligh, Tarbiyyat, Ta'lim, Finance, Wasaya, Audio/Video, Waqf-i-Nau, Rishta Natah, Public Relations, General, Umur Amma, Publications, History/Exhibits, Tehrik-i-Jadid, and Khuddam. Dr Masood A Malik, the national general secretary, presented the proposals sent by the jama'ats for discussion and the proposals selected for discussion, followed by the formation of subcommittees to discuss the proposals. The proposals for discussion were divided into four groups under tabligh, tarbiyyat, finance and general, and four respective subcommittees were formed.

The subcommittees met during the night and the next morning to discuss the proposals and present their recommendations to the general body.

Secretary Tabligh reported about 200 new bai'ats during the last year. Secretary Finance reported a 16 fold increase in the total jama'at budget during the twenty years of the fourth khilafat, and a 5 fold increase during the 13 years of the Amarat of the late Amir MM Ahmad. He presented a budget of over 8 million for the next year. Delegates were informed that almost 800 members participated in ta'lim classes while about 600 members attended tarbiyyat seminar held so far. The Publication secretary's report showed publication of 175,000 copies of books and flyers and 37,000 copies of magazines and newsletters during the last year. Tehrik-i-Jadid secretary reported a 30% increase in donations taking the total to $814,483.82. Audio/Video secretary showed new additions to the alislam.org site such as askIslam. Secretary Waqf-i-Nau visited five jama'ats and held audience with children. Secretary Property presented an update on the on-going, completed and planned mosques and centers construction projects at a later time.

The general informative session of Sunday morning was divided into two sections. In the first section, the national secretaries interacted with the delegates to explain the working of their departments and to address the concerns and questions of the delegates.

The second section was devoted to in-depth discussion on tabligh where the delegates presented ideas and their success stories, what works and what does not work, the weaknesses and strengths, and issues they are facing. One point which came out loud and clear was that we succeed when we follow the instructions of the Khalifatul-Masih, and we fail when do not. References were given frequently to the instruction of Hadrat Khalifatul-Masih IV, rahimahullah.

Reports and recommendations of the general and finance sub-committees were discussed in the second session held Sunday afternoon.

In the last session on Monday morning, reports and recommendations of the tarbiyyat and tabligh subcommittees were discussed.

In his closing remarks, Dr Ahsanullah Zafar, the US Amir, thanked all the workers who made the holding of the shura a success, reiterated the important challenges before the jama'at, and wished everyone a safe journey back. Shura concluded with collective prayers.

June 4, 03

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Continued from page 32

izers of the event. They spent several hours, both before and after the event, to ensure a seamless experience and also prepare for next year's event. Under Sadr Sahib's leadership, please remember the following organizers in your prayers: Rizwan Alladin, Mir Sharif Ahmad, Tahir Ahmad, Kaleem Ahmed, Ali Ahmed, Mahmood Ahmed, Irfan Alladin, Kaleem Aqeel, Muhammed A. Chaudhry, Basharat Hameed, Zeeshan Hamid, Belal Khalid, Pervaiz Khan, Yusef Lateef, Hamid Malik, Mansoor Malik, Rafiuddin Malik, Zahid Mian, Mahmood Qureshi, and Salman Sajid. All these individuals also had several team members to support them.

In the Name of Allah, most Gracious, ever Merciful

MKA USA Ijtema 2003

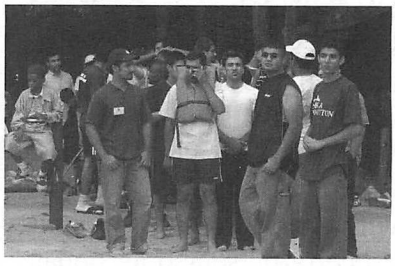
Majlis Khuddam-ul-Ahmadiyya, USA holds its 25th Annual Ijtema

Report compiled by Zahid Mian

Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya, USA held its annual Ijtema at Camp Minsi in Pocono Summit, Pennsylvania from August 8 - 10, 2003. This was the 25th such gathering in the United States. 787 participants witnessed this historic Ijtema, the largest ever. Members from as far as California, Washington, Texas, Michigan, Florida, and Massachusetts attended. MKA USA was also blessed by the participation of our Respect Naib Ameer USA and former National President MKA USA, Munir Hamid, and Ameer South Africa, Abdur Rashid Yahya. In addition we were also honored to have the following Murabiyan: Mukhtar Ahmad Cheema, Azhar Haneef, Muhammad Zafrullah Hanjra, Syed Shamshad Ahmad Nasir, and Bilal Abdul Salaam. Also present were Sadr Ansarullah and former National President MKA USA, Nasir M. Malik, National Secretary Tabligh, Ali Murtaza, National Secretary Public Relations, Zinda Mahmud Bajwa, and Mureed Nazir and Habibur Rahman Peer from MTA. Other notables included former Sadr MKA, Abdul Shukoor Ahmad, Dr. B. K. Ahmad, Professor Sultan Akbar, President Boston Jamaat, Dr. Amer B. Malik, President Houston Jamaat and former Sadr MKA, Munum A. Naeem. May Allah bless all our distinguished guests for taking time out of their schedules to join the youth of the Jamaat.

The Ijtema was conducted against the beautiful landscape of the Poconos Mountain range, which included a lake and dense trees. Not only did the Khuddam enjoy the regular activities of the Ijtema, but they also took the time to take a stroll in the woods, swim in the lake, and paddle the boats. The Khuddam were also excited about staying in tents under the starry night. Their excitement wore down a bit during the rainstorm, but a night of surviving the downpour only added to their overall experience. The kids especially enjoyed the sight of deer roaming around their tents.

The Ijtema began with the Friday Sermon delivered by Maulana Azhar Haneef. The Flag Hoisting ceremony was



held immediately after the sermon. Naib Ameer USA led this ceremony in which he shook hands with all the

National Amila members and the Qaideen. The Flags of USA and Ahmadiyyat were raised behind a chorus of the customary Naras (slogans).

The first session commenced under the chairmanship of Naib Ameer USA. After the recitation of the Holy Quran, the MKA pledge, and the poem of the Promised Messiah [as], Sadr MKA USA, Naseem Ahmad Waseem, read out a message from beloved Huzoor [atba] which he had written for the participants of the Ijtema. In the message, Huzoor drew the attention of Khuddam and Atfal to perform the five

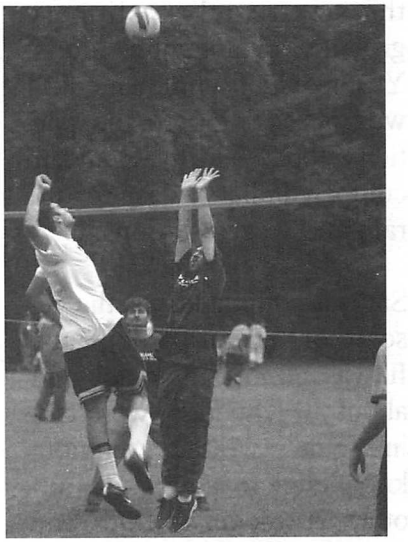
daily prayers and uphold the institution of Khilafat. After this, Naib Ameer USA addressed the participants. He spoke of his conversion to Islam and Ahmadiyyat, and he encouraged the Khuddam to be more active in their Tabligh and Tarbiyyat responsibilities.

The next few hours were reserved for sports and other recreational activities. Preliminary rounds for volleyball and cricket took place in the evening. Some participants watched the sports, while others took advantage of this time and participated in swimming, boating, walking through the woods, and even archery.

Following dinner and prayers, the National Shura convened its opening session. 83 delegates and 2 observers participated in this meeting. Simultaneously, a Talqeen-e-Amal/Q&A program was held for the general members. This session was very successful as many Khuddam and even Ansar sat through the night listening to our respected panel of Murabiyan share answers to questions about Tabligh and Tarbiyyat.

Saturday morning began with Tahajjud prayers. The Tarbiyyat department did a great job of going around the site and waking up members. This resulted in a near-capacity attendance during Tahajjud and Fajr prayers. Muhtamim Tarbiyyat, Rafiuddin Malik, commented: "With prayer and respect for our membership, we made sure that members attended all programming and prayers in particular to maximize their Ijtema experience."

After a few announcements, the Talim competitions began. Talim competitions are the most anticipated event of the Ijtema. Each year more and more participants compete, and the quality of the competitions also improves. This year was no exception. The competitions included Memorization of the Holy Quran with Split Word Translation (2 levels), Recitation of the Holy Quran, Recitation of Urdu Poem, Recitation of Al-Qaseeda, English Poem (participants had to write their own poem on the subject of the Promised Messiah), Impromptu Speech, Oral Religious Knowledge (26 teams), Written Religious Knowledge Exam (200 questions), and an Essay on the topic of Dajjal. Masha'Allah there



was great participation in all the events. "The level of preparation this year was very impressive", commented Irfan Alladin, Muhtamim Talim "The spirit of the Ijtema was truly demonstrated, even when we had to conduct certain competitions

in the late hours of the night."
In the afternoon, semifinals and finals were held for volleyball and cricket. A competitive soccer match was held between the Northeast and the South regions. Despite the heavy rain, participants took it all in stride opting to finish the games rather than having them cancelled. At one point thunder and lighting loomed large, but none of that mattered to those who were competing on the ground. The 100 Meter and the 4x100 Meter races were held at this time as well, but the finals were pushed back until Sunday morning due to darkness and the extremely slippery grounds. Muhtamim Sports, Yusef Lateef, commented: "I was pleased to see the participation. All Khuddam competed hard despite the rain and wet conditions."

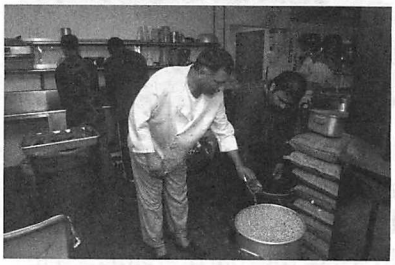
Saturday night tested the resolve of several participants. It was almost midnight and about 30 Khuddam were taking the written religious knowledge exam while another 20 members (kids and adults) slept in the same marquee. About 10 minutes into the exam, the rain resumed and this time the downpour did not allow for the completion of the exam in the marquee. Those members who were sleeping in their tents had to bear with the rain as many of them scampered to close the tents. Over forty members worked past 2:00 AM to ensure a quality experience for the general membership.

A tree that fell and ripped a power line knocked out power for a great part of the morning. This could have caused havoc due to the fact that breakfast could not have been prepared without electricity, but it was purely Allah's Divine Mercy that the Langar team happened to on this occasion make the food the night before. The Langar team did a wonderful job of preparing and serving food. The team worked almost around the clock to the serve the participants and every meal was ready to be served prior to the designated time.

After Fajr, the final session of the Shura was held. The Shura was immediately followed by the final session of the historic Ijtema. The session was once again chaired by Naib Ameer USA. After the recitation of the Holy Quran, the pledge and poem, prizes were distributed to both Atfal and Khuddam. After the prize distribution ceremony, Naib Ameer USA delivered the final speech of the Ijtema. In his address, he picked up where he had left off in the first speech, continuing to stress the importance of Tabligh and our Tarbiyyat. He once again drew upon his personal experiences to encourage the Khuddam.

The session concluded with silent prayers, officially closing the historic 25th Ijtema. Pens celebrating this historic event were distributed to all the participants. The organizers helped in wrapping up the event by cleaning the site and placing the items in their proper location. Within minutes the wrap-up was completed. Khuddam greeted each other with the greetings of peace and congratulated each other on a successful Ijtema as well as requested prayers for a safe journey back home.

Participants of this Ijtema



appreciated the effort of the organizers. Qaid York, Nurrudin Bashir, said: "Due to the weather, the sports were a challenge, but overall it was great program." A recent immigrant from Islamabad, Pakistan, added, "In Pakistan we can't hold three-day events, so this was definitely something new."

Please pray for all the organ

Message from

Hazrat Khalifatul Massih^aba V

for Khuddam and Atfal

at the occasion of USA Ijtimah 2003

O ye Green Saplings of the Promised Messiah, alaih salato wassalaam

Assalamo alaikum warahmatullah wabaratuhu

I wish to remind the Khuddam and Atfal of the United States of America about Prayers because I get a feeling that not all of us are perhaps vigilant about the requirement of observing the five daily Prayers in congregation. In some cases, this may be due to lack of training in their younger days. In other cases, distance from the nearest Salat center may be a hinderance but then distance has never prevented the people of this country in pursuit of other worldly objects. So why should we forget this duty that we owe to our Almighty Creator? Allah has commanded the believers:

"Be watchful over Prayers, particularly over the Prayer the hour of which approaches when you are occupied." (Ch.2: v.239)

Allah has also guaranteed:

"Prayer shields a votary against indecency and misbehaviour." (Ch.29: v.46)

Hadhrat Abu Hurairah, Allah be pleased with him, relates that the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said: "The first item in respect of which a person would be called to account on the Day of Judgement would be prayers." (Tirmidhi) He also relates that he heard the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, say: "Tell me if one of you had a stream running at his door and he should take a bath in it five times every day, would any dirt be left upon him?" He was answered: "No dirt would be left on him. The Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, observed: "This is the case of five Prayers. Allah wipes out all faults in consequence of them." Bukhari and Muslim)

Hadhrat Abdullah ibn Masud, Allah be pleased with him, relates that he asked the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him: "Which action is most acceptable to Allah?" He answered: "Performing the slalat at its due time." I asked: Which next?" He answered: "Benevolence towards parents." I asked: Which next?" He said: "Striving in the cause of Allah." (Bukhari and Muslim) You will observe from this Hadith that the observance of Prayers has been placed foremost, well above Jihad. Youth is an impressionable age and some people should realize

that Allah has granted a loftier status to Prayers.

The obligation of observing the Prayers for a Muslim has also been likened to a fish wanting to get back into water.

In view of this brief message, I hope that the Khuddam and Atfal would resolve that from this day forward, they would always learn how to say the Prayers, observe their five daily Prayers, after Wudhu, on time, preferably in congregation, slowly and with deep reflection and in the manner taught to us by the Promised Messiah, alaih salato wassalam.

My second message to Atfal is that they say in their pledge that they would always remain loyal to the institution of Khilafat. In order to comply with this pledge, they should safeguard this institution by placing their trust in Allah and obeying the instructions of the Khalifa given to them though their Juma'at.

I pray that Allah blesses and rewards all those who participate in this Ijtima'a most generously and enables us to remain as try Ahmadi Muslims.

Mirza Masroor Ahmad
Khalifatul Masih V

Concluding address

by Sadr Khuddam-ul-Ahmadiyya, SA

Dear Khuddam and Atfal,

Assalam-o-Alaikum

I hope those who attended the 25th Annual National Majlis Khuddam-ul-Ahmadiyya, USA Ijtema 2003 reach home safely, and I hope all of you will try your best to implement in your daily life all that you have learned during the Ijtema. The speeches at this year's Ijtema were so inspiring that some of you commented that the atmosphere here resembled that of a small Jalsa Salana. We were so fortunate that Hazrat Khalifatul Massih V (May Allah strengthen his hands) graciously sent us a special message for prayers. I urge all Khuddam and Atfal to inculcate his message in your daily lives under all circumstances. Please remember Hazrat Khalifatul Massih V (may Allah strengthen his hands) in your special prayers.

Keep in mind the message of Respected Naib Ameer Sahib who mentioned the story of a student who inspired his teachers and fellow colleagues so much that he made them change their perceptions of Islam. They were so impressed by this student that they wanted to learn more about Islam. In light of this example, I urge all of you to become like that student, so that everyone around you will change their opinion about Islam.

At the same, I would like thank all the organizers who made this Ijtema a successful one. The successes are the result of each organizer praying first before he performs work as part of a team. To all the workers, I don't have the words to thank you. I remember that Hazrat Khalifatul Massih IV (may Allah be pleased with him) once said that if you are unable to thank someone, Allah will bestow upon that person a better reward. Jazakamullah to all the organizers and participants of the Ijtema. Please remember Jama'at Ahmadiyya in your prayers.

Jazakamullah

Naseem Ahmed Waseem

Women's Rights and Scriptures

An Interfaith Dialogue

Report compiled by Mansoora Minhas

Majlis Khudam-ul-Ahmadiyya, Baltimore hosted an interfaith dialogue on the topic of ***"Women's Rights and Scriptures"*** at the Towson Library Meeting Hall on May 31, 2003. Representatives of Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam enlightened the audience with their perspective on the topic based on their Holy Scriptures. Approximately ninety people attended the event including 28-guests from all the major religious denominations. Imam Bilal Abdus Salam in his opening remarks said that women of different faiths are often mistreated and the purpose of this forum is to gain an understanding and knowledge of women's rights in different religions and remove misconceptions about the issue.

Dr. S Siva represented the Hindu faith and explained that most of the eastern traditions have a different perspective of life. They do not believe in one life, rather they consider birth and death to be two milestones in a chain of repeated lives. Thus the rights of a person gain a different perspective. Hindu scriptures stress that a man and a woman are two sides of the same coin. They can also be considered as the two wings of a bird. In ancient Hindu traditions, Rishis and Rishitas were both revered for spiritual wisdom. When social norms were promulgated, they became more restrictive and narrowed down with the passage of time. Women were subjected to greater rigidity culturally, biologically and psychologically. A pressing issue was the protection of women, whereby they were kept inside and granted this by their fathers, then husbands upon marriage and ultimately by sons. Education and economic freedom of women is an eternal truth. To put this in effect is a continuous journey. Thus, the goal is that on an individual and social level, women should attain complete equality.

Susan Savia of Buddhist faith stated that in her religion the order of the monks which spread religion comprised solely of men and women were prevented from performing religious rights. They were considered to be incapable and inexperienced to spread religion. This was only superficial as it reflected the respect for cultural conditions of that time. It is a fact that religious teachings have no gender relevance; they are equal for both men and women. They have no hierarchy and accomplished men and women teachers are found in Buddhism. In practice, women's rights are not an issue. All human beings, both male and female possess the ability to achieve enlightenment.

Dr Harvinder Arora of the Sikh faith said that Sikhism is one of the latest religions,

about 500 years old. Sikhs believe in reincarnation and that human form of life is one unique form in a chain of lives. All human beings originated from a single source, thus everyone is equal, both men and women. There are no differences in Sikh scriptures with regards to rights of men and women. The holy scriptures mention that it is the females who give birth to kings and they are not inferior in anyway. Women are treated equally and they actively participate in all spheres of life. They have a right to choose any profession. With regard to marriage, they have a right to choose their partner. In Sikh faith, women are given the title 'Kaur' which means 'Lioness'. The title depicts that women are fearless, free to come forward and utilize their potential without any inhibitions.

Myrna Seidman represented the Judaic faith. She said that the status of women depicted in the Torah mirrors the social history of 3000 BC or approximately 5000 years ago. Status of women was extremely low. To understand the Judaic viewpoint on the subject, one has to consider how the Jews view the authority of the Torah. It is not the only source which governs Jewish life. Rather the system of laws that has been articulated by the Rabbis has to be considered. There are few accounts in the Torah of women exercising their rights. Their sole responsibility was child bearing. Women were treated as a possession and what was theirs first belonged to their fathers and brothers, then husbands and sons. Children were considered to be the husband's property. Only a man could initiate a divorce and the woman's consent was not required. Men could have multiple wives. Boys were treated as superior and more valuable and girls are not mentioned in the Torah. In the census, only the male population was counted. Legally, women had no inheritance rights. They were not allowed to testify in court. A man could sell his daughters. For adultery, there was equal punishment for both men and women. Women had the same moral responsibility as men, but only men were required to fulfill religious obligations. Women were barred from priesthood. They were subject to laws of impurity and were considered to be unclean for 40 days after the birth of a boy and 80 days in case of a girl. Few women have been mentioned in the Torah. Among one of their deeds that has been praised in that they did not worship the golden cow. The low status of women depicts the social morals of that time. The Rabbinic interpretation is more binding. In most of the braches of Judaism, the status of women has evolved considerably from what is presented in the Torah. Today Jewish women enjoy the same rights as men and are treated as equal.

Dr Anne Laprade said that Christian women enjoy several rights as they play a variety of roles. Jesus was a person of humble origins and he changed the lives of many women and still does. Mary who plays a major role in Christian traditions was tested as a young girl of 15 and was visited by an angel. Mary Mac, one of the most faithful followers of Jesus is mentioned several times in traditions. Jesus appreciated women's ability to grow and prosper. Women became teachers and evangelists. In Christianity there is openness to people from all cultures and genders. Initially women were socially isolated but later became recognized as teachers and leaders. Rules of conduct as laid down in the Bible seem like restrictions, but they have to be understood in context. The early Church flourished in a culture where both men and women were required to have modest conduct. There is tension in Christian scriptures with regard to the topic. Explicit and restrictive rules of conduct were laid down for women. But later on,

their status was uplifted. Paul affirmed the equality of all people. They are all equal and honored. Women continue to experience transition.

Christian Kirby also representing the Christian faith said that the motto 'They may all be one' is a reflection of reality. Christian teachings are divided along social, class, geographical and income lines. There is a strict ideological divide between the conservative liberal. This divide is apparent in the role of women. Pope Paul, the sixth said that priesthood can only be from among men. To understand the topic, one has to decide whether the scripture is the literal or inspired word of God. There are several translations of the scriptures and books of the Bible vary. So how much weight one puts on the Holy Scriptures is crucial. The conservative view allows only men to be ordained. Women were not permitted to teach, they were required to remain silent, subordinated and in submission. The liberal viewpoint is that since the women's role is highly restrictive, a bias is reflected in the practices of the Church. Jesus treated men and women as equal. Half of the members of his close circle were women. Paul treated women as equal and co-workers and deserving of positions of authority. The liberals question the authorship of some of the passages of Timothy and Thais. They claim that there is yet more light and truth to be derived from God's words. Today women play a leadership role in the churches and the rock of God's churches is women.

Nusrat J Bashir representing the Muslim viewpoint said that the greatest charge levied against Islam is its cruelty to women. Despite that, Islam is the fastest growing religion of the world today. It is growing at a rate of 235% as compared to Christianity whose growth rate is 46%. In the US alone, 100,000 people convert to Islam per year. The ratio is: for every man, 4 women are joining the fold of Islam. If the charges levied against Islam are true, then why would an American woman give up her freedom to join a cruel faith?

In pre-Islamic era, women were treated as mere property and they lacked basic human rights. They were inherited, traded and abandoned. They were mere slaves and chattel with no rights. They were abused and lacked education. In the US, such conditions existed till the 19th century whereas in Arabia with the advent of Islam in the 6th century, women were given equal rights and they were elevated spiritually. Women were considered to have a soul and the same spiritual capacity as men. The Holy Qur'an asserts the equality of women. In contrast to the other Holy Scriptures, it repeatedly addresses both men and women. Women have the same religious duties and they are not responsible for the sins of men. They had the same goals – to do righteous deeds and avoid evil. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) stressed that it is the duty of every man and women to seek knowledge. His wife, Hazrat Ayesha (ra) played an active role in the service of Islam and passed her knowledge to others and narrated numerous traditions which are a part of the Shariah. It is interesting to note here that in the US, the first time that a university opened its doors to women was in 1881.

Islam gives women a right to earn, own money and property. A married woman retains her own name. The Holy Qur'an says that men are guardians over women. They have the responsibility to provide for women. Islam granted women the rights to inheritance 1300 years ago. In all aspects of a women's life, the Qur'an provides clear guidance. The cruel practice of killing daughters

upon birth was abolished in Arabia after the advent of Islam. Islam guarantees the dignity and liberty of women. Women have an equal right to divorce. Islam has elevated the status of women by teaching 'Paradise lies under the feet of mothers'. What we witness in majority of Muslim world today cannot be considered as true adherence to Islam. In fact they have deviated from the fundamentals of Islam and thus are not its true representatives.

Missionary Maulana Mukhtar A. Cheema said that Islamic teachings are beautiful but unfortunately they have been misunderstood. What is witnessed today in the Muslim world is the cultural practices of certain regions and must not be misinterpreted as Islamic teachings. Women in countries of the Middle East and the Subcontinent are treated badly and have no freedom irrespective of their religious faith. What is being practiced in these countries is not in line with the commandments of the Holy Qur'an and Holy Prophet (saw). Men and women are created from a single source and are equal. Women can lead in piety and righteousness. The best is one whose deeds and actions are the best. The Holy Prophet was the recipient of Qur'an and thus endowed with its best understanding. And he said 'The best among you is one who treats his wife well'. A comparative analysis of religions proves that no other religion equals Islam in the status and freedom that it gives to women as a daughter, wife, mother and sister. Men are guardians, protectors, providers and caretakers of women. A husband has a great responsibility and must provide for his wife. If Islam is not being practiced truly in any region of the world, it should not be blamed for the shortcomings of its followers.

A Man of God

Essay for the Atfal Competition in National Ijtimah USA 2003

By Adeel Khan, Age 11, Baltimore Jamaat

As becomes quite apparent from the title of the book, every phase of Khalifatul Masih IV's life seems as if to have been ruled and overseen by his devotion to God. Allah addressed Khalifatul Masih IV directly and directed all his decisions ; he never embarked on any task without divine permission. This confirms his special relationship with Allah. God listened with individual attention to his prayers. There are many, many incidents in the Khalifa's life when he prayed to Allah the one, and Allah responded to his request.

When Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad was a fourteen year old boy, suddenly uncertain

about the existence of the one God—he prayed to Allah to make Himself known, and He did :

"I saw the entire earth squeezed into a ball. There was no creation of any sort visible—no life, no cities, nothing—just the earth. Then I saw each particle of the world tremble and burst out into a slogan : *OUR GOD!* Each particle was proclaiming the reason for its existence." This was his initial contact with Allah. And in addition this instance which he narrated :

"One night I woke up jumping from my bed. I was in the grip of a power which cannot be described, though it was an experience very similar to the revelation I had from God when I was a boy.

I found that I was saying, 'Aadhaa Wa Aamr, Aadhaa Wa Aamr' ('more destructive, more bitter') so strongly and powerfully that it was not in my control.

I repeated it again and again." This is just one revelation he received in his Khilafat ; in fact he refers to another one within this recollection—I have quoted that also, previously ; it relates to his uncertainty of the existence of God.

Another example of his relationship with Allah : at the selection of the fourth Khalifa, Allah—only Allah—chose him as the most God-fearing, possessor of the most *at-taqwa*. This proves he feared God a great deal.

The muhabala, which the Khalifa issued to General Zia ul Haq, itself was an ideal illustration of his relationship with Allah : when he prayed to Allah, he answered his prayer in only five days ; and he did more than that—almost every important general was in the plane, that crashed.

A smaller example is that which relates to the visa which he should have had to visit Holland : when after five months the visa did not arrive, he decided to go lacking of it ; but hardly any time prior to his departure the visa appeared. Allah decided he should have it to depart.

There are many miracles of Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad's Khilafat. For example, when he issued the muhabala, after 5 days, newspaper headlines read *Zia Blown Out of the Sky.* This is quite self-explanatory : normally planes do not perform a roller coaster loop and then plunge down into the ground and burst into flames ; it must be described as a "miracle".

Also, when the Khalifa escaped from Rabwah and the persecutors of Ahmadiyyat, no one was able to prevent him from leaving until approximately twelve hours. Zia's hopes had utterly failed!

Intending to maliciously extinguish the Movement, he instead inadvertently offered it the immense prospect of shifting the head of the community to the connection of the world. Coincidentally, a similar sort of incident occurred in the Holy Prophet 's lifetime when he migrated to Medinah from Makkah. He directed Hadhrat Ali[ra] to sleep in his bed the night when the Makkan Chiefs encircled his house to attempt to spitefully imprison him and prevent his escape.

These examples I have given here of the events which took place throughout the approximately twenty-two years of Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad's Khilafat demonstrate his exceptional relationship with Allah.

***Please note** that after the Khalifa's name, the phrase Rahmatullah Alaih has been omitted during the essay so as to accommodate the text to the reader.*

Fasting: Fourth Pillar of Islam

Muhammad Zafrulla Khan[ra]

`The Holy Quran states: `O ye who believe, fasting is prescribed for you during a fixed number of days as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may safeguard yourselves against every kind of ill and become righteous. But whoso from among you should be ailing, not being permanently incapacitated, or should be on a journey, shall complete the reckoning by fasting on a corresponding number of other days; and for those who find fasting a strain hard to bear is an expiation, the feeding of a poor person, if they can afford it. Whoso carries through a good work with eager obedience, it is the better for him. If you possessed knowledge you would realise that it is better for you that you should fast.'(1)

`The month of Ramadhan is the month in which the Quran began to be revealed, the Book which comprises guidance for mankind and clear proofs of guidance and divine Signs which discriminate between truth and falsehood. Therefore, he who witnesses this month, being stationary and in good health, should fast through it. But whoso is ailing, not being permanently incapacitated, or is on journey, should complete the reckoning by fasting on a corresponding number of other days. Allah desires ease for you and desires not hardship for you; He has granted you this facility so that you should encounter no hardships in completing the reckoning, and that you may exalt Allah for His having guided you and that you may be grateful to Him.'(2)

`It is made lawful for you to consort with your wives during the nights of the fast. They are as a garment for you and you are as a garment for them. Allah knows that you were being unjust to yourselves, whereof He has turned to you with mercy and has corrected your error. So consort with them now without compunction and seek that which Allah has ordained for you, and eat and drink till the break of dawn begins to manifest itself. From then on, complete the fast till nightfall. But do not consort with your wives during the period when you are in retreat in the mosques. These are the limits prescribed by Allah, so approach them not. Thus does Allah expound His commandments to the people, so that they may safeguard themselves against evil.'(3)

The idea of the fast has been inculcated in all religious disciplines which are based on revelation, though strict conformity to the ordinances relating thereto is no longer insisted upon. Indeed, within some disciplines, the fast has been reduced to a purely symbolic observance. In Islam, the ordinances relating to the fast are clearly stated and defined and to the degree of their applicability, they are strictly observed. A tendency towards greater rigidity is sometimes encountered and has to be checked and countered through exposition of the true purpose of the fast and of the meaning of the regulations and their spirit.

Subject to the permissible exemptions, the observance of the fast is obligatory upon

every adult Muslim during the month of Ramadhan, the ninth month in the lunar calendar current in Islam. As the lunar year is shorter by about eleven days than the solar year, Ramadhan rotates through the year and the seasons, arriving eleven days earlier every year. Thus in every part of the earth, it progresses through every season in turn. In the tropics, when Ramadhan falls in the summer season, not only are days longer than in the winter but the fast entails additional hardship on account of the heat, as normal occupations and pursuits have to be carried on and in the intense heat and dryness, a severe degree of thirst may have to be endured through several hours each day. The fast is, however, in no sense a penance. It is a physical, moral and spiritual discipline, and the object is the promotion of righteousness and security against evil. Through the experience of the fast, the worshipper is impelled to exalt Allah for His having provided the guidance and is prompted to the beneficent use of His favours and bounties.(4)

Outside Ramadhan, a voluntary fast may be observed at any time, except on the two festival days. The Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, often observed a fast on Monday and Thursday but he did not approve of a voluntary fast being observed on a Friday.

A fast is prescribed as an expiation or as an alternative penalty in respect of certain crimes or defaults, but in these cases also, the object is the promotion of physical, moral and spiritual values. For instance, if a person on Pilgrimage to the House of Allah is unable to offer the sacrifice of an animal as prescribed, he should observe the fast for three days during the course of pilgrimage and for seven days after return home, making up ten altogether.(5) The expiation of an oath is a fast for three days.(6) The alternative penalty for killing game while on Pilgrimage is a fast for a number of days corresponding to the number of animals killed. The alternative penalty for manslaughtered is a fast for two consecutive months(7) and the same is the penalty for Zihar, a frivolous declaration by a husband that henceforth consorting with his wife would amount to consorting with his mother, a hateful method of pronouncing a divorce, practised in pre-Islamic days abolished by Islam.(8)

A vow of silence during a certain period(9) has also been described in the Holy Quran as fast.(10)

Physical Observance

The observation of a fast, whether obligatory or voluntary, or by way of expiation or as a penalty, is subject to the same regulations. The period of the daily fast extends from the first flush of dawn normally about an hour and a quarter before sunrise, till after sunset. During this period neither food nor drink or nourishment may be pass through the lips of a person who is observing the fast. Nor should any drug or other substance be swallowed or injected into the system. The fast may, however, be discontinued in case of emergency and would be terminated if the person observing the fast becomes sick. Nor should there be any consorting between husband and wife or any approach to it.

The fast must not be continued beyond sunset even if nothing is immediately available for terminating the fast save a few drops of water, a pinch of salt or sugar, a bit of stale bread or a dried date, etc.

If during the fast, food or drink should be swallowed in complete forgetfulness of the fast, that would not vitiate the fast and the fast should be completed till nightfall. Should, however, something

be swallowed through carelessness, even involuntarily, the fast is vitiated and cannot be continued.

It is customary and is considered desirable that a light breakfast should be taken immediately before the commencement of the fast. The breaking of the fast after sunset should not be made an occasion for gorging oneself with food and drink. This would be in contravention of the fast and would be a departure from the example of the Holy Prophet, on whom be peace, which must be adhered to. It could also prove harmful to health.

The month of Ramadhan is a period of intensive training in beneficent values. Abstention from food and drink and conjugal relations for a certain number of hours each day through a month is a valuable exercise in endurance and steadfastness. But that is only the outer shell, as it were of the fast. Yet even this has a great social significance. It brings home to the well-to-do sector of society the meaning of hunger and thirst. Privation ceases, in their case also, to be a mere expression and becomes an experience shared in common with all. The consciousness that a large number of their fellow beings have to go hungry most of the time is sharpened and there is great eagerness to share with them the bounties that Allah has, of His grace, bestowed on themselves.

The True Purpose of Ramadhan

The true purpose of Ramadhan, as of all forms of Islamic worship is to draw people closer to Allah. Though normal pursuits and occupations are carried on as usual, the emphasis on moral and spiritual values and concentration on them are intensified, and everything is subordinated to the main purpose. The hearing, the sight, the tongue, the mind are all under stricter control. For instance, not only vain talk, but much talk is also eschewed, so that there should be greater concentration on remembrance of Allah and reflection upon His attributes. The Holy Prophet said: `He who abstains from food and drink during the period of the fast but does not restrain himself from uttering a falsehood starves himself to no purpose.' It is related of him that during Ramadhan, his own concern for and care of the poor, the needy, the sick and the orphan was intensified manifold, and that his charity knew no limit.

Recitation of the Quran and I'tikaf

The study of the Quran and reflection over the Divine Signs recited therein takes up the greater part of the time that can be garnered by reducing the other demands upon it to a minimum. Divines and scholars carry on discourses on the Quran throughout the month. Voluntary Prayer during the latter part of the night is deemed obligatory during Ramadhan but may be offered individually or in congregation. For the convenience of those who may find it difficult to proceed to a mosque at that hour to take part in the service, a congregational service is held after Isha, the evening service. Whether held after Isha or before Fajar the follow up passage after the Fatiha assumes considerable proportions. The service comprises eight raka'as, offered in four units of two raka'as each, and is led by an Imam who is Hafiz, that is one who has learnt the whole Quran by heart. During this service, the recitation from the Quran is made in sequence and the recitation of the whole of the Quran is completed during Ramadhan. This entails the recitation of approximately one twenty-eighth of the

Quran in the course of the daily service, one eighth of that portion being recited as the follow-up passage after the Fatiha in each raka'a. The Imam, of course, recites from memory and the congregation follows the recitation with rapt attention.

That is another unique feature of Islam. No less than seventy times is the Scripture of Islam referred to in the Revelation itself by the name Quran. The word means that which is repeatedly read, recited, proclaimed. It is the only Scripture which is in its entirety expressed in the words of the revelation. It is thus the only one which is literally the Word of God. Its very name is a prophecy that it will be widely and repeatedly read, recited, and proclaimed. Its text, in the words of the revelation, is preserved intact and in its proper sequence in the memories of millions of its devotees from generation to generation. Hundreds of millions read and recite portions of it in Prayer services and otherwise in the course of the day and night around the globe. During Ramadhan the number is greatly augmented. Numberless people read it through by themselves during that month. Others hear it interpreted and expounded.

A much larger number hear it recited from beginning to end in the course of the service just described. All this in the very words of the revelation in which it was sent down close upon 1400 years ago. That in itself is a matchless Divine Sign and Testimony.

During the last ten days of Ramadhan, many people go into seclusion, as it were, in a mosque and devote the whole of their time, not occupied by the obligatory and voluntary services, to the study of the Quran and the remembrance of Allah. This period of complete devotion of a worshipper's time to the exercise of the purely spiritual values, is the culmination of the physical, moral and spiritual discipline instituted by Islam. To carry such a discipline farther would be a sort of asceticism or monasticism which is not approved of in Islam.(11)

Prohibitions

Complete abstention from food and drink during the period of the fast does not constitute so great a hardship for a Muslim as adherents of other disciplines may be disposed to imagine. Muslim children are brought up in an atmosphere of respect for and devotion to the values indicated by the faith. Very early they begin to exhibit an eagerness to practise them. Parents have often to restrain young children from observing the fast. They are trained into endurance of the rigours of the fast through a gradual process, spread over a number of years. A child of twelve or thirteen may be permitted to observe the fast on three or four days at intervals during one Ramadhan. The following year, he may be permitted to increase the number to eight or ten. In the third year he may be content with fasting on each alternate days. In the fourth year, he would be ready to assume the full obligation.

Another very helpful factor is furnished by the dietary regulations of Islam. In the matter of food, the prohibitions are blood, the flesh of an animal that dies of itself and is slaughtered for food, the flesh of swine and the flesh of an animal on which the name of any other than Allah has been invoked, meaning thereby, sacrifices made to idols or other gods and offerings made to saints or to any being other than Allah.(12) The first three categories are prohibited because they are harmful for the body, and that which is harmful for the body is necessarily harmful for the spirit. The last prohibition relates to something which is manifestly harmful morally and spiritually in as much as it involves association of

others with Allah.

A relaxation is made in the case of a person who is driven by necessity and to whom no other means of sustenance and nourishment is for the time available. Such a one may partake of a prohibited article of food, consuming only that much as he may consider necessary for his immediate need. In such instance, priority is given to the need of maintaining and sustaining life, as against the possibility of such harm, if any, as might result from the consumption of a minimum quantity of the forbidden article.(13)

Liquor and all intoxicants are forbidden. It is recognised that some people may derive some pleasure or advantage from the use of liquor or other prohibited article, but it is pointed out that the harm resulting from their use is far greater than any pleasure or advantage that might be derived from it.(14) The prohibition however is clear and absolute:

`O ye who believe, liquor, gambling, idols and divining arrows are only an abomination of Satan's handiwork. So shun each one of them that you may prosper. Satan's design is only to promote enmity and hatred between you through liquor and gambling and to keep you back from the remembrance of Allah and from Salat. Will you desist?'(15)

It needs to be remembered that in the matter of any pleasure or advantage to be derived from liquor or any other intoxicant, and the harm that may result from their use, it is, not only an individual or a class that has to be considered; society as a whole must be taken into account. It may well be that the harm resulting to an individual or to a number of individuals may not be overtly manifested, but there is no denying that society as a whole suffers grave harm from the use of liquor and other intoxicants. The purpose of the Quran is not only to furnish guidance for the individual, but to furnish guidance to the individual as a member of society and, indeed, to mankind as a whole.

These are the prohibitions, but not all that is permissible may be used as food and drink in all circumstances. Of that which is permissible, only that may be used as food and drink which is clean and wholesome.(16) This has a relative aspect also. Articles of food and drink over a wide range may be wholesome for a child or for an invalid. But even that which is permissible and is clean and wholesome may be partaken of only in moderation:

`Children of Adam, look to your adornment at every time and place of worship, and eat and drink but be not immoderate, surely, He loves not those who are immoderate.'(17)

Within these limitations, there is neither harm nor sin in eating and drinking of the good things provided by Allah out of His bounty, so long as the objective is that life may be sustained and health promoted for the purpose of carrying out Allah's will through firm faith in the guidance that He has sent down and action in conformity therewith.

`There is no harm for those who believe and work righteousness in respect of that which they eat, provided they are mindful of their duty to Allah and believe and work righteousness, are again mindful of their duty to Allah and carry it out to the uttermost. Allah loves those who carry out their duty to the uttermost.'(18)

Here, then is a gradation which is elastic and yet takes full account of the immediate as well as the ultimate purpose of food and drink. That which is harmful on the whole is forbidden altogether, except in the case of

extreme necessity, when the preservation of human life must take precedence even at the risk of some, possibly only temporary, harm. The exemption or relaxation in such a situations is only in respect of the minimum quantity that would suffice for the immediate need. Under this restriction, the possibility of harm would be slight, and once the immediate need has been met, the prohibition would continue to operate.

Of that which is permissible only that which is clean and wholesome may be consumed as food and drink but only in moderation. That again is a relative matter to be determined with reference to the requirements of each individual and class.

Finally, not only the immediate purpose of food, drink, but also the ultimate purpose, namely the promotion of the moral and spiritual values must be kept in view.

Discipline and Righteousness

It will thus be appreciated that a Muslim's freedom in respect of food and drink, as indeed in respect of all matters is controlled by beneficent regulation, and is disciplined. During Ramadhan, the regulation and discipline become stricter in order to intensify the effort for the achievement of the ultimate purpose. That which is forbidden as being harmful, whether in the matter of food and drink or in respect of any other activity, is to be abstained from at all times. In the month of Ramadhan, there is to be abstention during the period of the fast even from that which is lawful and permissible; food and drink which sustain life, and marital intercourse which promotes the continuance of the species, the purpose being to win the pleasure of Allah. It also has a symbolic aspect. By observing the fast, the worshipper makes a pledge or covenant that if in the course of carrying out his duty of complete submission to the will of Allah, he should be called upon to put his life in jeopardy or to sacrifice the interests of his progeny, he would not hesitate to do so. Such a discipline practised through a whole month every year should ensure that the participant would, during the remaining eleven months of the year progressively achieve greater and greater adherence to moral and spiritual values.

It must never be overlooked that the whole of fasting, whether obligatory, as during the month of Ramadhan, or voluntary, as at other times, is to promote righteousness, which means the progressive cultivation of spiritual values. The same applies when the fast is observed as an expiation or a penalty. The spiritual recompense of proper observation of the fast is high indeed. The Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, has said:

'There are appropriate spiritual rewards for all worship and righteous action; the ultimate reward of the person who observes the fast solely for winning the pleasure of Allah is Allah Himself.'

Prayer

The month of Ramadhan is one of the months of the lunar calendar. It begins with the appearance of the new moon and ends with the next appearance of the new moon. As soon as the new moon of Ramadhan is sighted, a joyous surge of anticipation inspires the hearts of young and old. The season of closer communion with his Most Glorious, Ever Merciful, Most Compassionate, Most Forgiving Lord of the worlds, Originator, Creator, Fashioner and Maker, Master of the Day of Judgment, has opened and we have been accorded once more, by His Grace, the good fortune of witnessing it and the privilege of striving to enrich our-

selves through the continuous opportunities it provides of seeking the pleasure of Allah. All praise to Allah for His unending bounties! Greetings and felicitations are exchanged all round. All is bustle and solemn preparation. Mosques begin to fill with eager worshippers for the Maghrib service to be followed after brief interval by Isha and then Taravih during the eight raka'as of which the congregation is privileged to listen to the recitation of the Holy Book from the very beginning to the end in proper sequence, evening after evening till, by the end of the month, the whole has been recited. The greater part of the night is passed in supplication and in precise, glorification and remembrance of Allah. Those who prefer to offer the eight raka'as of voluntary Prayer during the latter part of the night rather than in the evening as Taravih occupy themselves with it as the time approaches for a light breakfast in the solemn dawn hour. The Muezzin's Call to Prayer with its first Allaho Akbar, Allah is Great is the signal for the commencement of the fast and preparation for the Fajr Salat.

Thereafter the normal daily routine is followed with a heightened consciousness of the duty owned to Allah and to His creatures, one's fellow beings. Praise, glorification and remembrance of Allah form, as it were, the infrastructure of all activity and greater attention is directed towards caring for the poor, the needy, the widow, the orphan, the sick, the distressed, the neighbour, the wayfarer, etc. Courses on the Holy Quran are given in mosques and seminaries. Towards the close of the day the heart experiences a glow of gratitude to the Divine that His Grace has enabled one to approach the end of the fast having spent the night and the day in striving to conduct oneself in conformity to His will.

The Muezzin's Call to Prayer for the Maghrib Salat is the signal announcing the end of the fast, which is terminated with a mouthful of water, a cup of tea, a dried date or two, or even a pinch of salt should nothing else be immediately available and with the supplication:

'Allah, for thy sake I observed the fast putting my trust in Thee, and I have ended it with that which Thou has provided. Thirst is quenched and the arteries refreshed and I look for my recompense with Thee, if Thou should so will. I beg of Thee Allah, of Thy mercy that encompasseth all things, that Thou may be pleased to forgive me my sins.'

The Maghrib Salat follows within a few minutes and thereafter, the evening meal is partaken of. It is considered very meritorious to invite others, but more particularly the poor, the needy, the orphan to the breaking of the fast and the evening meal. These two need not be, however, separate occasions. A simple meal may be taken at the time of breaking the fast, thus preceding the Maghrib Salat. An elaborate meal designed as a compensation for the period of assentation is not only contrary to the spirit of the fast but tends to also upset the digestion. In this, the spirit of the fast is not respected and observed as strictly in certain part of Muslim would as could be wished.

Termination

The Isha service and Taravih complete the rhythm and tempo of daily life during Ramadhan. When the month beings to approach its end, the general mood is one of pensiveness which promotes eagerness to take full advantage of the remaining days to make up for any shortcomings and fallings off during the earlier periods. Numberless people experience closer communion with their Maker and Creator during this blessed month, the intensity and frequency of which continue to increase as the

month progresses.

The fast terminates with the appearance of the new moon. The new moon may be visible after sunset of the twenty-ninth day of the fast, but if not the fast must be continued the next day, thus making a total of thirty days during the month. It may be that on the thirtieth evening, visibility may be very poor due to atmospheric conditions, and the moon may not be visible. That would make no difference and Ramadhan would terminate at sunset on that day, as it is recognised that a lunar month cannot extend beyond thirty days. The same rule governs the commencement of the month.

The day following the last day of Ramadhan, determined as above, is observed as the Festival of the termination of the fast. It is one of those occasions when even a voluntary fast may not be observed. In conformity with the spirit of Islam, the only celebration prescribed for the Festival is an additional service during the forenoon comprising two raka'as and an address by the Imam. The service may be held in one of the bigger mosques of a large city, but in view of the large numbers involved, is generally held in the open. It is customary, following the example of the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, to take a light breakfast after sunrise before setting out for the service, and also to vary the route home on returning from the service.

The festive character of the occasion is proclaimed through exchange of visits, feeding the poor, visiting the sick and glorification of Allah and celebrating His praise in thankfulness to Him for the guidance provided by Him, particularly with regard to all that pertains to the observance of the fast, and for having enabled those upon whom the fast was obligatory to observe it duly.

Allah is Great, Allah is Great;
None is worthy of worship save Allah;
Allah is Great, Allah Is Great;
To Allah belongs all praise!

Allah is Great, Allah is Great;
None is worthy of worship save Allah;
Allah is Great, Allah Is Great;
To Allah belongs all praise!

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during the other months of the year also.

The purpose of taking medicine is to combat and cure an ailing condition and when it takes good effect one wants to maintain one's improved condition. Likewise when one reduces weight after a course of dieting one wants to maintain one's lower weight and similarly one wants to maintain one's improved physical condition after completing a course of exercise. After completion of the holy month of fasting one is able to gauge one's improved spiritual condition as a result of one's devotion, conduct, prayers and divine favours received during that period. On Eid-ul-Fitr one should reflect one's condition of spiritual improvement and resolve not to lose what one has gained but rather, not only to maintain it, but to press forward to even higher spiritual development through righteous conduct, prayers and seeking the Grace of God.

This is the spirit of Eid-ul-Fitr.

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The Spirit of Eid-ul-Fitr

This religious celebration is observed on the day following the last day of fasting which is observed daily by all able-bodied Muslims from dawn till sunset throughout the Islamic month of Ramazan. It is a day of much rejoicing and happiness especially for those fortunate persons who observed the fasts and reaped the spiritual fruits of this holy exercise in accordance with the directions of God in the Holy Quran.

Fasting has been prescribed in one form or another by all the revealed religions of the world. The Bible tells us that Prophet David[as] declared "I humbled my soul with fasting" (*Psalms* 35:13) and we read in the New Testament that "the disciples of Jesus and the Pharisees used to fast" (*Mark* 2:18). We are also told that "Jesus fasted forty days and forty nights" (*Matthew* 4:2).

One does not only feel happy on Eid-ul-Fitr because through exercising self-discipline one has successfully complied with the commandment of God to observe the fasts, but also on account of a feeling of spiritual exhilaration which glows within the heart and soul.

No doubt on Eid-ul-Fitr much pleasure is derived from wearing new clothes, meeting friends and relatives and eating specially prepared food. These are all ways of celebrating the occasion. The main event, of course, is the religious service when one offers prayers and listens to the inspirational address of the Imam on relevant matters concerning the significance of the occasion. As the main purpose of fasting is to develop righteousness and self-purification (*The Holy Quran*, 2:186) the most attractive garment one should be wearing is the one mentioned by God in the Holy Quran:

The raiment of righteousness - that is the best. (7:27)

The real food that one should be enjoying is the spiritual nourishment acquired during the month of fasting.

Eid-ul-Fitr should remind one of many lessons learned from fasting and which, during the holy month of Ramazan, one should have endeavoured to keep in mind and to have practised. One of them is the offering of one's morning (Fajr) prayer before sunrise and also of the offering of the efficacious pre-dawn prayer (Tahajjud) which is highly recommended. One realizes that it is not too difficult to arise early and offer these prayers at the proper time. If one can discipline oneself to do so during the month of fasting then it is not impossible to to do so